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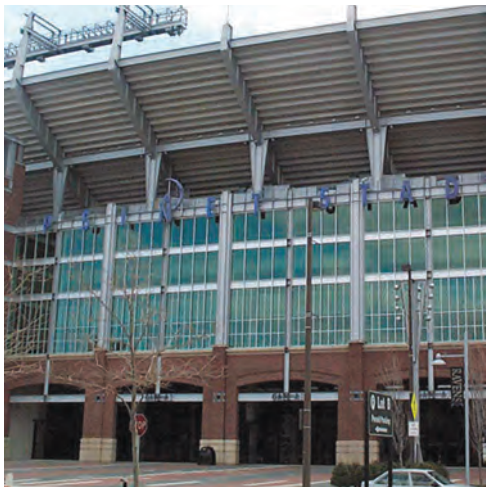

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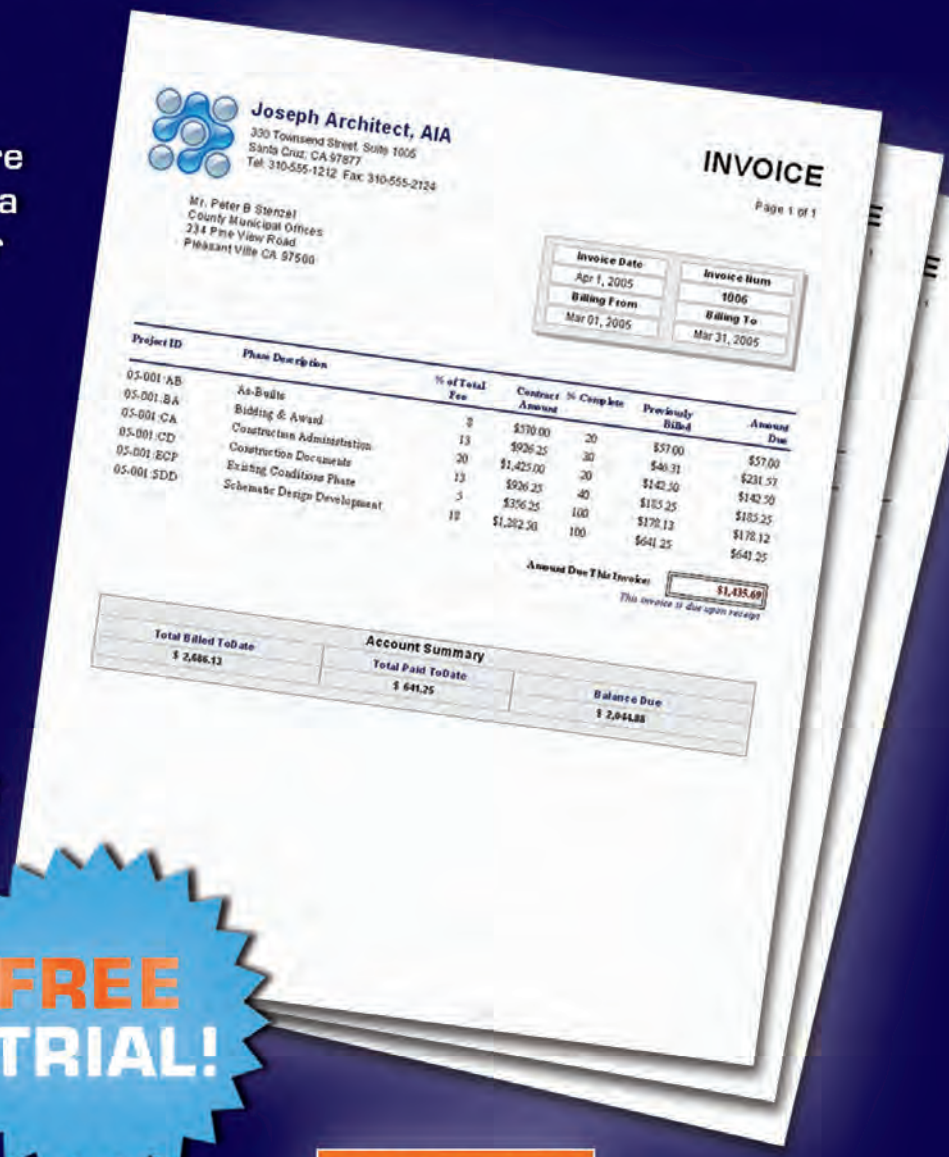

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Footbridge, Austin, by Miró Rivera Architects; photo by Paul Finkel

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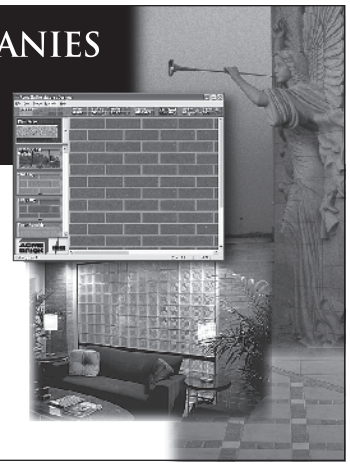

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Nature of a Movement

Bold initiative on high-performance design thrusts architects into vanguard to help avert a global crisis

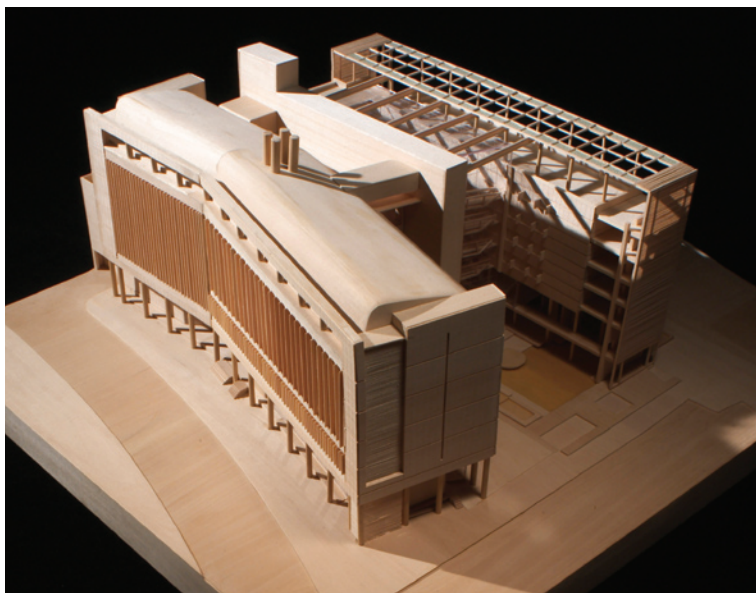
CALL it boldly ambitious or utterly absurd, but the AIA's Board has set 2010 as the goal for cutting in half the amount of fossil fuels used to construct and operate buildings in the U.S. While proponents prefer to describe the initiative as aggressive, they hasten to point out that radical measures are absolutely essential to forestall the continued warming of the planet's atmosphere. And because the operation of buildings exceeds all other energy consumption in the nation, the AIA's leaders felt compelled to act. In December, the Board adopted two position statements that promote sustainable design and resource conservation through collaboration with other organizations. (Copies are available at *texasarchitect.org.*)

The Board's action stems from investigations by the AIA Sustainability Summit Task Force led by incoming AIA president R.K. Stewart, FAIA. "Buildings account for 48 percent of U.S. energy consumption and generate far more greenhouse gas emissions than any other sector," Stewart said recently. "As architects, we must accept responsibility for our role in creating the built environment. We feel it is incumbent upon the architectural profession to alter our actions and encourage both our clients and the entire design and construction industry to join us in plotting a course of measurable changes that will improve the quality of life for everyone."

Halving the energy consumption of buildings within four years is necessary, Stewart said, because scientific research indicates that 2010 is a critical milestone for worldwide greenhouse gas emissions to be brought under control. However, if emissions continue at current rates, the research forecasts life-threatening consequences of rising sea levels and changing weather patterns that will affect every continent. That dire prediction comes from Edward Mazria, AIA, an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico's School of Architecture and Planning whose research was instrumental in convincing Stewart's task force to recommend that the AIA Board adopt its position statements. (Learn more about Mazria's findings at *www.architecture2030.org.*)

Now that the Board has sounded the clarion to rally the profession, the next step may be to break the news to everyone. With that thought in mind, I invited a small group of practitioners to discuss the issue via an online forum. My first question was: "Any realistic approach to achieving the AIA Board's goal will hinge on the client. How do architects bring their clients into the conversation about their building's environmental impact?" Snippets from two of the responses follow:

Peter Pfeiffer, FAIA, of Austin, a long-time proselytizer of sustainable design, wrote: "Your question hits squarely on the issue of architects needing to know how to articulate the value of what we can do for our clients—specifically, well-integrated design. In this case, it is having the tools to cogently describe the value of high-performance building. (I don't use the term 'green building'—too much baggage.) In doing energy-efficient buildings for over two decades now, I have never had a client express disinterest when explained these benefits: your building will last longer, cost significantly less to operate (both in maintenance costs and utilities), be a healthier place for you and your employees to work (fewer sick days equals increased productivity), and may cost only slightly (three to five percent) more to build, if any more at all… Clients don't know this stuff; neither do many builders or engineers. It is up to us as the 'inspired generalists' in an industry of specialists to lead our clients into looking at things from a slightly broader viewpoint."



High-performance design is the hallmark of the Institute of Molecular Medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston. Designed by BNIM Architects, the facility will be completed this year.

Expressing a similar train of thought, Brian Malarkey, AIA, who leads the eco-services team at Kirksey in Houston, wrote: "Most of our clients' eyes glaze over when we talk to them about their building's impact on the environment. I think the current success of the green building movement lies in marketing the business case for green, the conversation starter to which our clients can best relate. There are two major areas that translate into benefits for our clients—operational savings and human resource capital. Operational savings is the easiest area in which to initiate change because saving resources saves operational costs, with energy and water savings ranging between 20 and 50 percent… Human resource capital can be a bit more difficult to measure but is the greater of the two savings vehicles because providing a quality environment increases productivity, health, and well-being. What client would not want to boast these conditions?"

The consensus among the forum participants was that clients would likely embrace high-performance design when benefits were translated into measurable savings. While some architects can adeptly explain the advantages, many others will need more information if the profession is to help redirect humankind's stewardship of the planet by charting a new course toward a sustainable future.

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AG Ruling Clear on Engineers

In response to the article (news story on p. 8, March/April 2006) regarding the Texas Attorney General's ruling: Is there any crumb of doubt after reading GA-0391 that engineers practicing comprehensive building design are in violation of state law? Attorney General Abbott states that the determination of whether an engineer may comprehensively design a building depends on "whether the adequate performance of the particular service or work requires a person with engineering education, training, and experience."

Last I knew, for over a century now architects around the state have been adequately performing architectural services without engineering education, training, or experience. Not surprisingly, Abbott's statement instead perfectly qualifies the traditionally understood practices of structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineering. The emperors have now been told they have no clothes. For how long will the weavers be allowed to continue weaving?

David E. Wright, AIA
Waco

National Trust Assists Texas Projects

I've just completed reading an excellent issue of *Texas Architect*. Thank you for highlighting the efforts of preservationist across the state. You featured a great sampling of articles—from adobe to a Miesian box! Bravo all around!

I write only to add a bit of information to your articles (which I recognize are limited in space and scope). The National Trust for Historic Preservation provided significant planning grants to the Socorro Mission, Laguna Gloria, and a number of the state's historic courthouses. For example, the National Trust provided a $9,000 grant to perform the paint analysis in the courtroom of the Red River Courthouse featured on page 46 in the same edition. I say this not to boast nor to correct your articles (which were very good), but simply to demonstrate how the National Trust is very active in sparking preservation projects in Texas.

Without the Trust's early planning grants or assistance in establishing a solid plan from an architect, engineer, or other consultant (such as a paint conservator), then the "bricks and mortar" work that follows may not be executed with the necessary precision, integrity, or sensitivity.

We work in close partnership with the Texas Historical Commission and other statewide and local preservation organizations around the region to provide field services, grants, and loans to save diverse historic places and revitalize communities.

Daniel Carey
Fort Worth

[The writer is the director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Southwest Office in Fort Worth.]

CORRECTION

MJS Lighting Consultants was inadvertently omitted in the project credits for the feature on the recent restoration of the Wharton County Courthouse. (See "History Revealed" on p. 32 in the March/April edition.) The Houston company should have been listed as a lighting design consultant on that project.

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S.A. Considers New Plan for Main Plaza

J. DOUGLAS LIPSCOMB, AIA

Main Plaza in downtown San Antonio has served as the city's central hub since 1731. Municipal officials are considering a redesign (shown below) that would close off sections of adjacent streets to automobile traffic.

SAN ANTONIO Current plans proposed to redevelop what is arguably Texas' most historic urban space, Main Plaza in San Antonio, raise a multitude of questions regarding the nature of urban space, mobility, historic character, the public design and review process, and even municipal governance.

Main Plaza, or Plaza de Las Islas, was created in 1731 when 56 people from the Canary Islands on the orders of King Phillip V of Spain arrived in Texas to establish the Villa of San Fernando de Bexar adjacent to the military fortification Presidio San Antonio de Bexar. In San Antonio, as with other Spanish colonial cities in the Americas, the town was laid out according to the Laws of the Indies, that stipulated the creation of central plazas. The original town plan featured the San Fernando Cathedral at the center of the city, with plazas on either side—Main Plaza to the east and Military Plaza to the west. (It was over San Fernando Cathedral and Main Plaza that Santa Ana's troops raised the flag of "no quarter" prior to the Battle of the Alamo.) In addition to San Fernando Cathedral, Main Plaza also serves as the "front yard" for the historic Bexar County Courthouse and the Municipal Plaza Building, a former Frost Bank built in 1922. The former banking lobby today serves as the location of San Antonio City Council Chambers.

Although many residents of San Antonio seem to support the idea of renovating the plaza, today battle lines are on the verge of being drawn again around Main Plaza over the current proposed renovation plan. The central issue is whether or not to maintain the streets currently bordering the plaza and the traffic that they carry. The vision for a plaza free from vehicular traffic was initiated by Mayor Phil Hardberger, whose ideals of the future of the space float between a city park where one can hear the birds singing and an urban plaza similar to those found in Mexico. A pastoral "park like" setting would be difficult to achieve in a space the size of the current Main Plaza, which is less than an acre in area and surrounded by automobile traffic. However, the closing of the streets bordering the plaza and the incorporation of their area into the project would, according to proponents, increase the total project area to approximately three acres, making the environment more pedestrian-friendly and eliminating some of the noise associated with the existing traffic. Pointing to the failed conversions of downtown streets to pedestrian malls that plagued many American cities, those who oppose the closing of streets argue that such a move would risk turning the space into a lifeless void without the vibrant mix of pedestrian and vehicular traffic that fuels area businesses. The city has hired consultants to study the traffic impact of various street closure options affecting the north-south streets (Soledad and Main) and the east-west streets (Commerce and Dolorosa/Market).

Critics of the proposed street closings have argued that more time should be allowed to take these concerns into consideration in the design of the plaza. Responding to the controversy surrounding the possible closure of streets included in the plan, the mayor recently announced that he will add another 60 to 90 days to the design process. Yet changing the construction start from September to November – or even to December – is still an ambitious schedule given the state and local design reviews that will be required for any renovation proposal for the historic space.

While traffic may be the major point of contention over plans to redevelop Main Plaza, other less combative issues also raise significant questions. At a recent public hearing, one of the project goals outlined by a member of the project's design team, landscape architect Larry Clark of Bender Wells Clark Design, is to reinforce the historic character of the space. But what historic character the team intends to reinforce is unclear. Created in 1731, the plaza was an

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

unpaved space bereft of any design elements, with spatial characteristics defined only by the surrounding buildings. Improvements to the plaza were made in the 1880s, anticipating the construction of the Richardsonian Bexar County Courthouse in the 1890s and the City Beautiful movement following the Colombian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. However, the character of these improvements did not reflect its Spanish origins as much as they did an Olmsted-like vision of green space that would serve to make the city a healthier place.

Like so many other urban spaces across the U.S., the relatively picturesque Main Plaza of

the 1890s fell victim to a banal 1960s redesign. The proposed plan for redevelopment indicates a formal garden featuring a central cross axis with a fountain, a paved area immediately in front of the courthouse to accommodate gatherings, and an area for food vendors. Ironically, in viewing historic images, one characteristic that is consistent throughout its history is that Main Plaza has always served as a dynamic transportation nexus for all types of mobility, including pedestrians, horse-drawn carriages, trolley cars, and automobiles.

Despite significant questions regarding the design, there seems to be broad support for renovating the plaza due not only to its historic nature but to complete the vision outlined in the city's Historical Civic Center Master Plan. With the recent renovations of adjacent structures – including the Bexar County Courthouse (2002) and San Fernando Cathedral (2003), as well as the construction of the Portal San Fernando (2001), a park linking Main Plaza to the Riverwalk – the currently under-designed Main Plaza is the unfinished hole in the middle of a nearly complete plan.

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Stabilization Project Begins On Ruins of Adobe Church

RUIDOSA One of its two mud-brick towers already has crumbled into a heap of rubble, and the remaining adobe walls of its nave and surviving tower are in danger of imminent collapse. But the ruins of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ Church still exhibit the impressive arched doorways that inspire admirers of adobe construction to venture far off the beaten path to this tiny borderland hamlet 30 miles upstream along the Rio Grande from Presidio.

A century or so after local parishioners erected the church – and decades after it was abandoned – work began in late March to shore up its walls, and distinctive arches, along with stabilizing the roof's structure and replacing the adobe foundation. Funds for the project have accumulated over the past year after concern among preservationists coalesced in late 2004 with the awarding of grants from several public and private entities, including the Texas Historical Commission and the nonprofit National Trust for Historic Preservation. Although the preservationists' ultimate goal is a complete restoration (estimated to cost around $250,000), only enough money has been made available to fund 90 days of work. That scope of work is expected to accomplish a minimal amount of repairs to the rapidly deteriorating building. Additional funds are being sought to replace the roof, rebuild adobe walls, and install interpretive signage that would explain the historical and architectural significance of one of West Texas' dwindling stock of adobe construction.

The church was in place in 1914; that much is known, yet preservationists think it may date to 1903. According to THC architect Lyman Labry, AIA, the church was abandoned in the late 1950s. The altar and bell were removed, he said, and these artifacts remain in Presidio County, but the building was otherwise left to decay. Deterioration of the structure accelerated within the last four years, Labry said, after its remaining cement-fiber roof shingles were removed because high winds were tearing them off. That minimized the danger of flying debris, but the removal of shingles left the church exposed to the elements. The condition of its adobe walls and milled lumber lintels quickly worsened.

In May 2004, THC funded a study to determine the extent of damage and the potential for preservation. That initial conditions assessment was completed in June 2004 by Cornerstones Community Partnerships, a nonprofit organization based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The group specializes in preserving adobe structures and its staff has developed expertise by working with craftsmen of northern Mexico who practice traditional adobe construction techniques. Cornerstones recently assisted the restoration of the historic La Purisima mission in Socorro, just south of El Paso. Among Cornerstones' contributions to that successful project were brick-making workshops, as well as a maintenance manual outlining how the mission's caretakers can protect the adobe walls.

As highlighted in Cornerstones' assessment of the Ruidosa church, the ruin's most distinctive features are its three arches—likely the largest extant round-structural adobe arches in the state. Two of the arches are located at front and back of the nave, with the third arch set adjacent to the nave at the base of the surviving tower. The assessment noted that the arch at the nave's entrance measured 17-1/2 feet wide, while the arch at the rear elevation measured slightly wider than 14 feet and more than nine feet tall. Critical bricks in both arches were reported to be either missing or slipping. While the report did not include measurements of the surviving tower's archway, recent photographs show it to be similar in size to the nave's front doorway. Also clearly evident is severe damage to the bricks that comprise the tower's arch.

The report's conclusion states: "The Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ Church, once cherished, is today a public hazard. Bearing mute testimony to decades of neglect, the church is no longer safe to enter. Continued inaction will lead to further ruin and eventual loss… Immediate action on behalf of this historic Church is warranted to stabilize the remaining evidence of original design, traditional materials, and fine workmanship. Emergency shoring will ensure structural stability, and will allow interested visitors and worshippers to return. The installation of in-depth interpretive markers will enhance the tourist experience. A minimal expenditure of time, funding, and expertise will transform this historic building into the meaningful destination it once was."

On March 27, almost two years after that conditions assessment, a pre-construction meeting was held at the site with THC's Labry, Cornerstones' adobe preservation specialist Pat Taylor, Presidio contractor Rafael Carrera Jr., and local businessman Jim Blumberg in attendance. The team assembled to finalize plans for the initial phase of stabilization work that commenced the next day.

For more information or to contribute donations, contact the Ruidosa Mission Project, P.O. Box 606, Marfa, Texas 79843.

STEPHEN SHARPE

PHOTO BY RICHARD PAYNE, FAIA, COURTESY THC

Abandoned since the 1950s, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ Church in the tiny West Texas border town of Ruidosa remains one of the most distinctive adobe structures anywhere in the state. The church is about 100 years old.

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AIA Lubbock Design Awards Announced

LUBBOCK Two projects received Honor Awards in AIA Lubbock's 2005 Design Awards ceremony held on Dec. 5. The jury – David E. Lewis, AIA, of David E. Lewis, Architect; MJ Neal, AIA, of MJ Neal Architects; and Al York, AIA, of McKinney Architects – selected the award recipients among the entries.

Jurors presented Honor Awards to two projects by Parkhill, Smith & Cooper—the Academic Classroom Building and the Dollye Neal Chapel.

The 65,000-sf Academic Classroom Building provides an open, interactive learning environment for students of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. The facility incorporates ample indoor circulation, lounges, and outdoor gathering spaces.

The Dollye Neal Chapel, located on the Midland College campus, is designed to serve as a threshold between solitude and community while providing a spiritual sense of place. The chapel accommodates seating for up to 50 people and includes a bride's room and an enclosed garden with additional seating and open spaces for gathering.

Merit Awards were presented to Mullin Hoard & Brown Law Offices by Michael Peters; North University Avenue Gateway by Parkhill, Smith & Cooper; Southwest Cancer Center by Parkhill, Smith & Cooper; and Omni Office Cafe by sls partnership.

The jury also awarded Citation Awards to City Bank North Overton by Parkhill, Smith & Cooper; Overton Park Residential by Parkhill, Smith & Cooper; and Raintree Christian Church by Michael Peters.

Academic Classroom Building

Dollye Neal Chapel

Mullin Hoard & Brown Law Offices

North University Avenue Gateway

Southwest Cancer Center

Omni Office Cafe

New USGBC Chapter Totals 3 for Texas

AUSTIN Last summer the U.S. Green Building Council incorporated its third and newest chapter in Texas. The Central Texas-Balcones Chapter joined two others – the North Texas and Greater Houston Area chapters – to represent the state on the USGBC' board of directors.

The Washington D.C.-based coalition of building industry companies and other groups has promoted environmentally sensitive building nationwide since its inception in 1993. The USGBC currently boasts 66 local chapters and organizing groups across the nation. Total membership was 6,123 in April, but that number represents companies and organizations instead of individual members. The three Texas chapters account for 295 individual active members.

While the green building movement in Austin began long before the chapter's formation, the Central Texas-Balcones Chapter meets some of the need outside of the urban area, says Katie Jensen, chair of the chapter's board. The Texas chapters offer members education and leadership opportunities and provide access to local green building resources. Each chapter leads state and local initiatives to encourage green building and use of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system – a USGBC certification program for sustainable development – through local symposiums, training, LEED workshops, and tours of LEED certified buildings.

The Greater Houston Area Chapter dates to 2001 and currently has 147 individual active members. The North Texas Chapter was organized in 2004 and currently has more than 200 individual active members. The Central Texas-Balcones Chapter currently has a total of 113 individual active members from Austin, San Antonio, and the surrounding area. Each of the three Texas chapters is included in USGBC's Lone Star Region, with local representatives from each chapter elected to the regional board.

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AIA Austin Awards Eleven Projects

AUSTIN AIA Austin honored 11 projects during the chapter's 2006 Awards and Honors Gala held on Feb.25 at the Seaholm Power Plant. The projects were selected from a pool of 69 entries submitted by local firms.

The Design Awards jury was composed of Carol A. Wilson, FAIA, of Falmouth, Maine; Dan Shipley, FAIA, of Shipley Architects; and Gordon Wittenberg of Wittenberg Oberholzer Architects.

The jury bestowed three projects with Honor Awards—Guest House by Miró Rivera Architects; Austin City Loft Interior by Page Southerland Page; and Collector's Loft by Fab Architecture (in association with Poteet Architects of San Antonio).

Guest House is located on a two-acre peninsula, surrounded by reed-covered wetlands that serve as a refuge for migrating birds. To limit the residence's ecological impact, the minimal footprint affords a light vertical structure, extending three floors in elevation. Floor-to-ceiling glass and the structure's surroundings provide a peaceful space to reflect upon the landscape.

Page Southerland Page's Austin City Loft Interior is situated in the heart of downtown Austin. The open-floor plan emphasizes views to the north and south, and the use of colored panels complements the natural light at the perimeter. The panels are arranged in a pattern repeating in fives horizontally and vertically, conveying both rhythm and randomness.

The Collector's Loft project, designed for an artist and collector, occupies the top two floors of an early twentieth-century factory just south of downtown San Antonio. A minimalist interior rendered in white suggests that of a gallery space and skylights permit diffused lighting throughout the residence. The loft includes living quarters, a studio, entertainment areas, private galleries, and roof-top terraces.

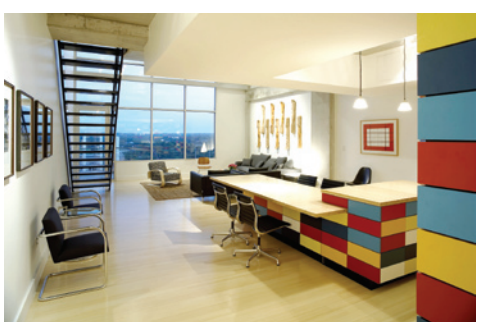
Merit Awards were presented to Graves Dougherty Hearon & Moody New Law Offices by Page Southerland Page; Pedestrian Bridge by Miró Rivera Architects; Austin Convention Center Parking Garage and Austin Energy District Cooling Plant by Barnes Gromatzky Kosarek Architects; Robbs Run Residence by McKinney Architects; and Ullrich Water Treatment Plant Extension by Casabella Architects.

Citations of Honor were bestowed upon three projects—Impluvium House by Webber Hanzlik Architects; Graves Residence by Mell Lawrence Architects; and Texas Hillel-The Topher Center for Jewish Life by alterstudio architects with Black & Vernooy Architecture & Urban Design.

In addition to the Design Awards, the chapter presented its AIA Austin 25 year Award to the Seaholm Power Plant. The 150,000-sf plant in downtown Austin no longer generates power for the city, and plans are currently underway to redevelop the Art Deco style structure for civic use.

Guest House

Graves Dougherty Hearon & Moody New Law Offices



Austin City Loft Interior

Pedestrian Bridge

Collector's Loft

Robbs Run Residence

Austin Convention Center Parking Garage

Ullrich Water Treatment Plant Extension

Kimbell Museum Anticipates Expansion

FORT WORTH In an article published on March 8, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported that the Kimbell Art Museum's "leaders said they were ready to move forward, after years of consideration, with a major companion building to the Louis Kahn masterpiece in the heart of Fort Worth's cultural district." This announcement has been anticipated since the purchase of property directly east of the museum in 1998. The Kimbell, built in 1992, remains a rare combination of quality—an astounding collection of masterworks exhibited within a structure universally regarded as one of the most significant buildings of the twentieth century.

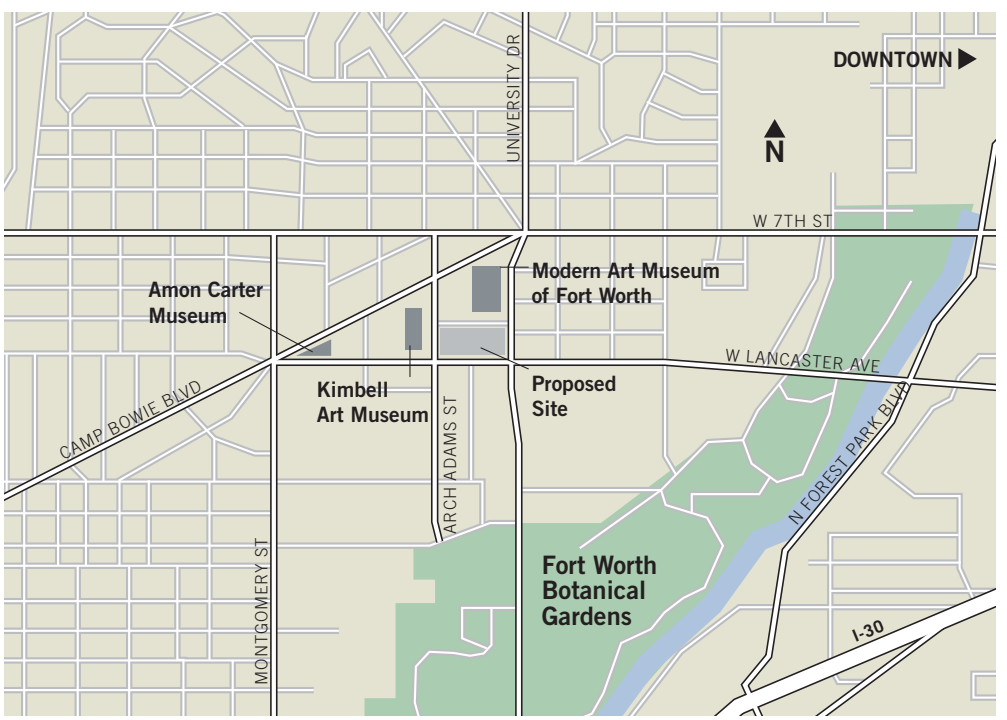
While there has been no announced program for the expansion, it likely will address the need for flexible space to accommodate touring exhibitions. That limitation, much to the disappointment of many visitors, has for years relegated portions of the permanent collection to storage. Neither has there been any mention of a process for selecting an architect for the future building. Despite the intimidating nature of the assignment, international interest will undoubtedly be keen to learn of a commission destined to be much discussed and dissected by design world's cognoscenti.

The most likely site for the expansion is on a 5.8-acre tract located across Arch Adams Street. To the north of the site, across Darnell Street, is the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, another signature work of modern architecture. The Modern, completed in 2002, was designed by Tadao Ando, who often said Kahn's museum was an inspiration for the Modern. Also, just a few hundred yards west of the Kimbell, is the Amon Carter Museum designed by Philip Johnson.

According to the *Star-Telegram*, the impetus for current discussions about preliminary planning for the Kimbell's expansion was the positive response from Kahn's daughter, Sue Ann Kahn, when recently asked whether she would support the idea of placing a new building across the street from her father's iconic museum. In 1990, Ms. Kahn publicly opposed plans to expand the Kimbell by adding vaults to its existing six concrete cycloidal vaults. (In addition the degree of physical connection to the Kahn design, the present site poses other challenges, including potential impact on the Kimbell's courtyard designed by Isamu Noguchi.)

By contrast, building on the site across the street probably would certainly alleviate many problems and thereby liberate a designer from most aesthetic restrictions. The site has one undistinguished building that likely will be razed before any future construction begins.

GREGORY IBAÑEZ, AIA



TEXAS ARCHITECT

Tour Explores Austin's Heritage Homes

The Heritage Society of Austin will hold its 14th annual Heritage Homes Tour spotlighting early 20th- century residential architecture. The walking tour will feature eight historic homes in the Heritage Neighborhood just northwest of the UT campus. For more information, visit *www.heritagesocietyaustin.org* or call (512) 474-5198. MAY 13

On Tour with Renzo Piano at the Nasher

The Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas presents *On Tour with Renzo Piano: Selected Projects from the Renzo Piano Building Workshop*, a traveling exhibition examining three decades of Piano's architecture with in-depth looks at the creative processes behind the works. Call (214) 242-5177 for more information. Opens MAY 13

More Gee's Bend Quilts at MFAH

The Museum of Fine Arts Houston presents *Gee's Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt*, marking the beginning of the exhibition's scheduled two-year nationwide tour. The exhibition showcases quilts created by women from Gee's Bend, Alabama, from the 1930s into the 21st century. Call (713) 639-7300 or visit *www.mfah.org.* Opens JUNE 4

Main Streets Conference in New Orleans

The National Trust Main Street Center will hold its annual National Main Streets Conference in New Orleans to explore the preservation of a community's sense of place through heritage resources. The conference will include classes, workshops, and field sessions on successful strategies for revitalizing commercial districts. Visit *conference.mainstreet.org* or call (202) 588-6219 for registration information. JUNE 4–7

AIA Los Angeles Hosts Annual Convention

The annual American Institute of Architects National Convention and Design Exposition will focus on the theme 'Architecture on the Edge,' exploring innovation, engagement, and inspiration in the field of architecture. The convention highlights a speaker series, tours, continuing education seminars, and networking opportunities. For registration information, visit *www.aia.org*. JUNE 8–10

Environmental Art at Austin's Wildflower Center

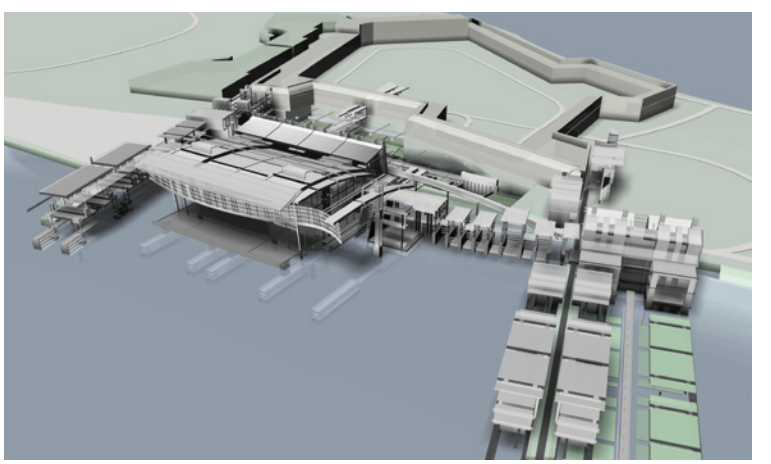
The Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center and Austin Green Art present *Sculpture in the Wild*, a public art exhibition featuring stone sculptures created by local artist Randy Jewart using four tons of native limestone. For more information, visit *www.austingreenart.org*. Thru JULY 27

LBJ High School Theater

Located on one of Austin's arts magnet school campuses, the LBJ High School Theater establishes a revitalized arts presence within a setting of utilitarian academic buildings. The theater building, designed by Austin-based LZT Architects, is composed of inner and outer shells, with the baffled walls of the interior expressed as colorful planes on the building's exterior. The 16,000-sf multiform theater extends outside through an outdoor performance space facing the existing exterior courtyard and lobby. The entry lobby of the performing arts center resembles a stage set as it stands under the overhanging roof of the structure's outer shell and serves as a backdrop to the courtyard performance area. In addition to the 500-seat indoor performance space, the theater also houses classrooms and workshops for the school's theater arts program. The project is scheduled for completion next January.

Institute for Jazz Studies

Jeffrey Olgin, an architecture student at Texas Tech University, recently received the 2005 form·Z University Joint Study Award of Distinction in Architecture for his conceptual design for the Institute for Jazz Studies. Designed for a site at historic Fort Adams Park in Rhode Island where the Newport Jazz Festival takes place each year, the project consists of two distinct buildings that house the campus and museum, along with a bridging element that connects them to performance spaces. Linkages between the institute's primary structures create boundaries, allowing for simultaneous separation and connection of the internal and external spaces, the existing fort, and the festival site. The project's design – with its composition of parallel bars – references the syncopated rhythms of jazz saxophonist Lester Young. Olgin conceived his design while a student of Associate Professor Bennett Neiman's fourth-year undergraduate studio.



Edinburg City Hall

The City of Edinburg is beginning construction on a new city hall, designed by TAG International, that will consolidate city departments and provide a new focal point for the government seat. Embodying a contemporary interpretation of Spanish Colonial and Baroque architectural traditions, the 42,000-sf structure will include a three-story tower which will provide a visible city landmark. The project site is located on a major axis through the city, that will connect the new city hall to the University of Texas-Pan American to the west and the Museum of South Texas History and the Hidalgo County Courthouse to the east. The project proposes to close a section of West McIntyre Street, replacing it with an elliptical plaza on the west side of the site. The plaza will anchor the existing Edinburg Auditorium, a state historical landmark, with the new facility and provide a multi-functional venue for public receptions, city council meetings, and cultural activities.

Call for Entries

Complete rules and entry forms for the TSA Design Awards and the TSA Studio Awards are online at www.texasarchitect.org.

Architects and clients of winning projects will be honored at the TSA Convention in Dallas, November 2–4, 2006.

Winning projects will be featured in the September/October 2006 issue of Texas Architect.

Deadline: June 2

TSA Design Awards 2006

2005 AWARD WINNER SUTHERLAND RESIDENCE BY MORRISON SEIFERT MURPHY; PHOTO BY CHARLES DAVIS SMITH, AIA

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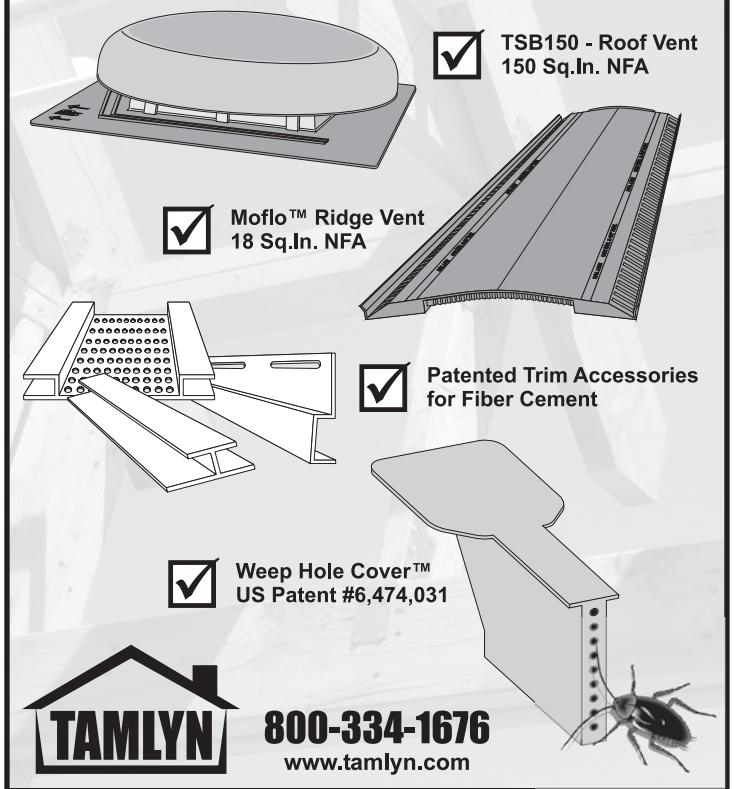

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The Grace and Disgrace of Weathering

Modernism's 'forever young' ideal is no match for nature's potential eloquence

by MAX LEVY, FAIA

MAX LEVY, FAIA

DRIVE between any two Texas cities and you'll be surprised at what often emerges as the most engaging building alongside the highway. It likely won't be the truck stop or the fast-food franchise or the awkwardly expressive church. More often than not, the most affecting building will be some rural ruin, a farmhouse or a barn or an equipment shed, marooned out in a field, long abandoned, and weather-scoured. Curiously, almost all the other buildings you've seen on the trip, though relatively new and trying desperately not to age, seem more or less dead, while these ruins seem by comparison to be soulfully alive. Hurtling past them, they recede in your rear-view mirror, but they linger in your mind.

Nostalgia is a part of our attraction to the old structures decaying out in those fields, but something deeper draws our attention. Sometimes it's their savage silhouettes that recall the avant-garde energy of early Frank Gehry or late Sam Mockbee. Other times it's the opposite that catches our eye, forms that are just so simple. The fact that these buildings may be leaning or sagging to some perilous degree only heightens their stark presence. And then there's all that gray, weathered wood, rusted metal, and time-worn masonry. Architects, we who invest so much work in resisting the rude effects of nature, are secretly awestruck by the beauty of such extreme weathering.

At certain times of day or season, at certain angles of view or light, these old places can even evoke a sense of timelessness or poetry. It is precisely these two qualities that alert our modernist sensibilities to these ruins; for modern architecture at its best is very much about timelessness and poetics. These are also qualities we seldom encounter anywhere these days, so when they do show up, regardless of the packaging, we are very alert to their presence. Agrarian buildings can achieve this highly charged state after they have weathered, while weathering of modernist buildings tends to diminish this condition.

Why are modernism and weathering so at odds? Historical architectural styles, in their adoration of the past, seem to fare better in this regard. Picture, for example, two buildings, both clad in wood siding painted white—one a nineteenth-century Greek Revival structure and the other a mid-twentieth-century modern flat-roofed design. Now picture the white paint peeling. The Greek Revival building seems at

ease with this bit of weathering. Some might even feel its romance increased. Meanwhile, the idealism of the 1950s building now seems too fragile to have been left outdoors. What was originally so bright-eyed now seems utterly forlorn. To maintain its power, modernism must be pampered, continually groomed. It can have no wrinkles, no gray hair, no loss of vitality. Modernism has this crazy, unattainable wish to be forever young.

This wishful thinking is played out in the architectural press. Seldom do we see anything published other than images of buildings in the full bloom of youth. On the rare occasion that we do see an image of a building that has aged, it is usually a "before" photo in an article about the building's triumphant restoration. Pictures of newly minted buildings can take on lives of their own in the cultural world and in our own imaginations. How many times over the course of our careers do we return to these perfect images as touchstones? How important they are as encouragements, helping us across rough places. But only in the abstract realm of print or electronic media can the "forever young" architectural wish actually succeed. For the real building standing out in the weather, however, it is another story.

Dust on a windowsill washes down a wall by the rain and bakes into a permanent stain by the sun. A structural span of delicately honed proportions sags just slightly after a time. A building panel warps out of alignment with the panel below it, emphasized now by a distracting shadow at the joint. These seemingly minor things can break a modern building's spell. Though widely regarded as "strong design," modernism is in truth the most fragile mode of architectural expression—it is strong yet fragile in the same way as poetry. Change just one letter or syllable and the whole poem goes on the blink. Modern buildings and poems both edit out the superfluous, bring the essential into tight focus by refining and adjusting. When successful, buildings and poems can be strangely transcendent. But a blemish on a modern building can assume the visual weight of any other part of the overall, carefully controlled, reductive composition. The blemish becomes visually inescapable. Ultimately it can even dominate the scene and mock our idealistic aesthetic intentions.

When we design the "forever young" image into our projects, we usually do so at the expense of other things. Very often those other things include weatherability. We secretly anguish over this issue when orchestrating the details of our buildings. The detail that will weather well very often interferes with that expression of ease we seek. The more weatherable detail tends to be more bulky, or introduces an undesirable extra line, reduces flushness or thinness. To achieve relatively short-lived though glorious architectural effects, we seduce ourselves into making the same detail mistakes over and over again. And over again time passes, our buildings' special effects spoil, and nature humiliates us. Why do we keep operating against our better judgment? It is as though we are in some kind of trance.

We are entranced by the idealism of modernism. Most of us are not even aware of this idealistic current flowing beneath all we do.

When we're in the presence of disappointing weathering, we feel a bit distanced from nature. On the other hand, when we're around a building that is in the process of weathering handsomely, we feel a bit more in concert with nature, and the passage of time seems less a negative thing.

Regardless of the caliber of our commissions, or the degree of intensity with which we address them, this current persists, however dimly. The modes of modernist expression we pursue may be white or gray, technological or earthy, but we are all propelled by the same idealistic desire: to lift people above life's complications. This goal can be brought into reality through rather abstract means—the deft choreography of a floorplan, the beauty of pure form, the meditative quality of natural materials unadorned, the embodying of natural light, a graceful structural system. All these aesthetic appreciations amount to a type of idealism. Occasionally, when this idealism coalesces in a work of architecture, it conjures an atmosphere of timelessness. To experience such an atmosphere is uplifting, and it is a worthy goal of our work. But we often become so entranced in our reach for timelessness that we lose touch with time's actual passage and the inevitable toll weathering will take upon our buildings.

Each building material has its preferred range of exposures to sun, rain, and compass. Some materials, if simply protected by an overhang, can last a hundred years or more and weather gracefully along the way. The same material left unprotected may, in only a couple of years, look neglected or abused. When we're in the presence of this type of disappointing weathering, we feel a bit distanced from nature, complicit somehow in human folly. On the other hand, when we're around a building that is in the process of weathering handsomely, we feel a bit more in concert with nature, and the passage of time seems less a negative thing.

Some of this thinking must have played a part in the amazing arc of Le Corbusier's career. His early work was predominantly white, striving for the machined, sunning itself, heedlessly exposed. His late work was gravity bound, of robust materiality, with time's passage visibly invited aboard every surface and detail. Alvar Aalto, too, began his career with white, spotless rationality; and he culminated with indeterminate forms whose discontinuous surfaces acknowledge nature's defiance of evenness. And over the course of both careers as their exteriors synchronized to nature's will, their interiors increased in warmth and opened to a wider spectrum of human yearnings.

It is a peculiar thing about modernism that almost all its key ideas were mined early on by the masters, and that many of us think our only path now is to refine the ore. This refining process, fueled by changing fashion and advances in technology, has its value and pleasure but tends to dwell on appearances. The work that results from this approach often conveys an exhilarating burst of youthfulness, and often fades disappointingly after a few years of adverse weathering. However, in the later work of the masters cited, there are principles that run deeper than appearances. These principles, coming as they did toward the ends of eminent careers, were never fully explored, and so we may choose design paths today that carry on this exploration. Over the past few years traces of these paths have appeared in the work of new generations of architects. These works admit that buildings not only age, but that they can do so eloquently. Perhaps at this point in the evolving history of modern architecture we may be ready for a little less "forever young" and a little more "forever."

Max Levy, FAIA, is a *Texas Architect* contributing editor.

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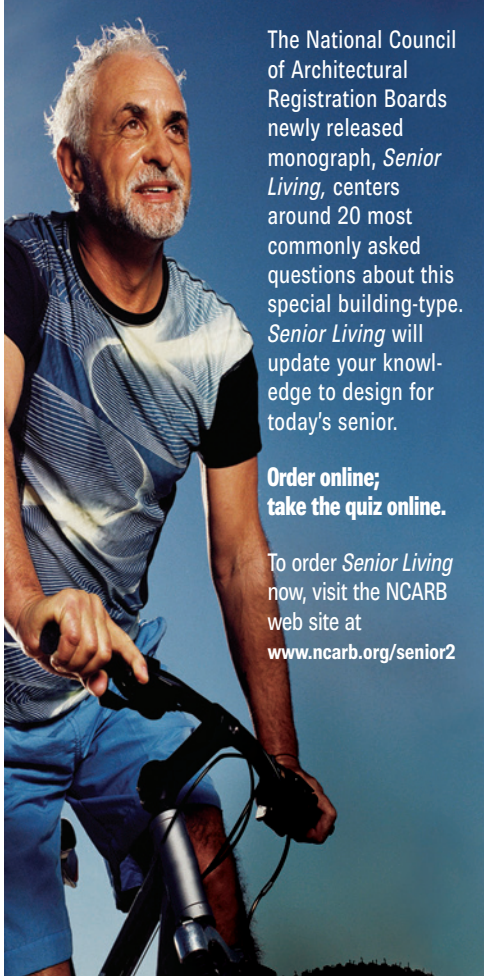


by WILLIS CECIL WINTERS, AIA

Renaissance for Dallas Parks

Among the future pavilions is a thin concrete-frame structure designed by Laguarda-Low Architects for St. Augustine Park in the east-side neighborhood of Pleasant Grove.

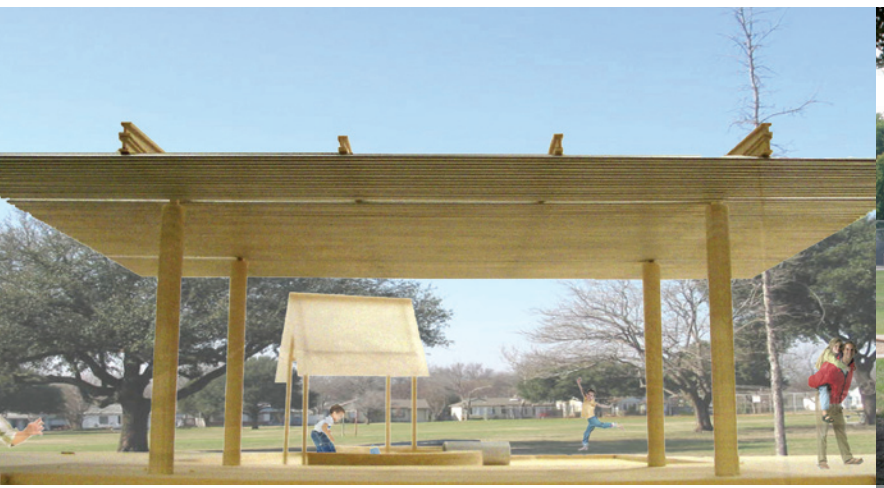
Once cherished by citizens as a public work of art, source of wholesome pleasure, glimpse of unspoiled nature; admired as the democratic equivalent of the royal garden, the American city park, after little more than a century, has lately fallen on evil days.

— from "The Origin of Parks" by cultural geographer J.B. Jackson

THE "evil" to which Jackson referred in his 1979 essay concerns the changing public perception of municipal parks. Jackson, our era's eminent observer of the American landscape, was lamenting the fact that city parks were no longer viewed as neighborhood assets. As he observed in his essay, the nation's city parks attained their ultimate prominence in the early twentieth century as attributes of a community's economic health and vitality. However, less than a hundred years later, public perception had fallen to the point where they were seen as unsightly liabilities to neighborhood security.

The decline of Dallas' neighborhood parks began much later than in most American cities, but the fall was nevertheless precipitous. In 1985, Dallas' park system was nationally acclaimed, having been recognized by the National Recreation and Park Association with its Gold Medal award for large cities. That year also marked the onset of the collapse of Dallas' real estate, banking, and insurance industries, which severely effected property values in the city. Tax revenues declined drastically, and the city slashed its operating budgets due to the shortfall. For the next 17 years, the annual budget of the Dallas park system decreased, with a commensurate negative impact on park maintenance. By 2001, neighborhood parks were warily viewed by surrounding residents who were concerned over upkeep and crime. Picnic pavilions were a source of particular anxiety because they had become popular venues for illicit behavior by day and gang activity at night.

To come to terms with years of benign neglect and to restore its tarnished reputation as one of America's great park systems, the Dallas Park and Recreation Department completed a long-range strategic plan in 2002, followed by the successful passage of a bond referendum the following year



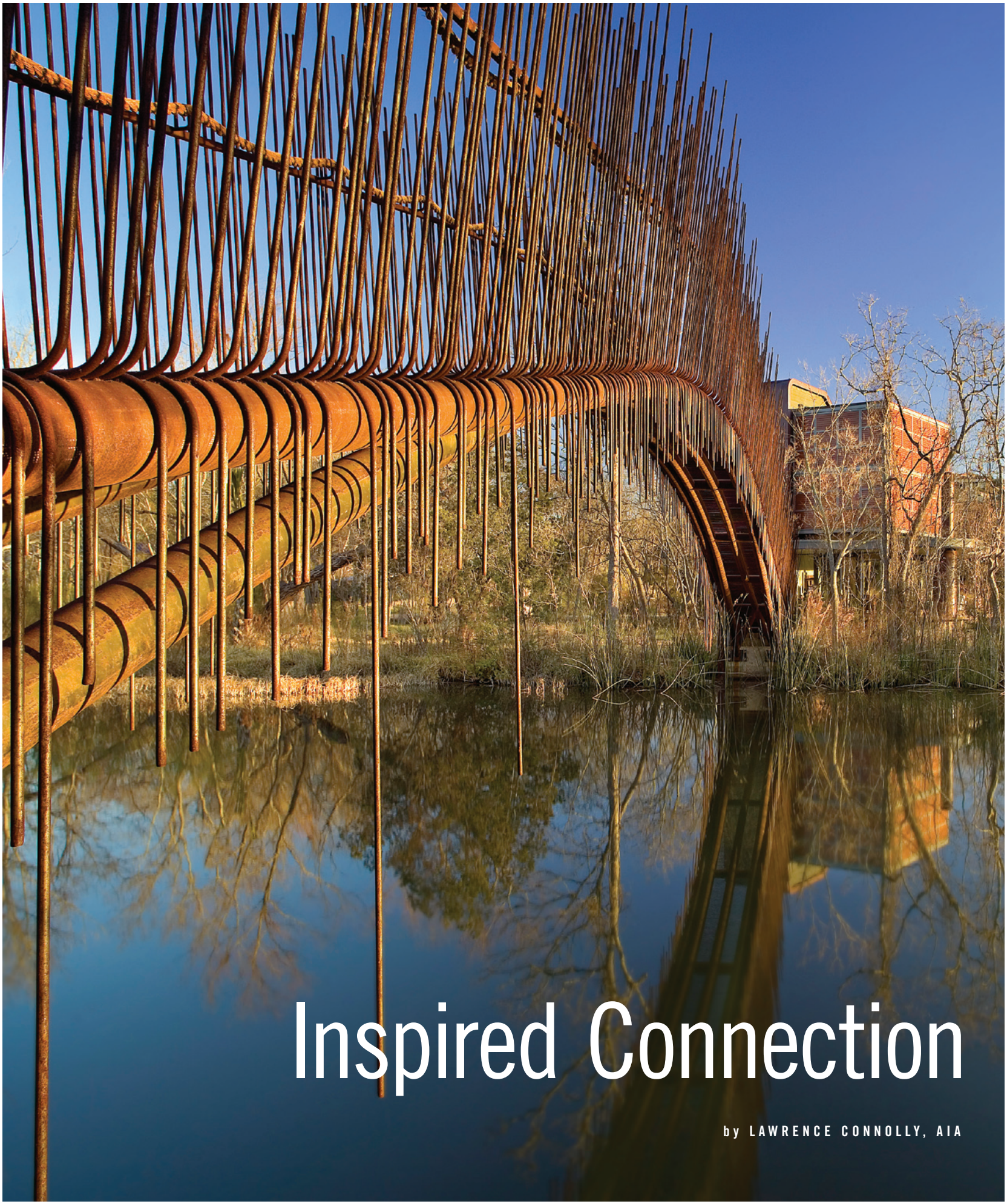
The 2003 bond package funded the design and construction of picnic pavilions at 23 city parks, including (clockwise from top left) Casa View Park by Sharon Odum, AIA, and Ron Wommack, FAIA; H.R. Moore Park by Pablo Laguarda, AIA; Opportunity Park by Rand Elliott, FAIA; and Ridgewood Park by Ed Baum, FAIA.

that provided the largest single amount for park capital development in the city's history—more than $100 million. The bond program also included a generous allocation dedicated toward restoring or replacing aging and unsightly picnic pavilions throughout the city.

In 2002, there were 107 pavilions distributed throughout Dallas' 336 parks. The oldest dated to the 1920s, including a stucco-covered Doric tempietto designed by Flint & Broad and erected in 1925 at Randall Park in East Dallas. During the late 1930s, the Works Progress Administration funded four picnic shelters clad in Millsap stone at Lake Cliff, Stevens, and Kiest parks in Oak Cliff, and Tietze Park in East Dallas. These substantial, random-ashlar rock structures were designed by Dallas architect M.C. Kleuser, who employed the heavy rustic style used by the National Park Service and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) for thousands of park structures built during this era at state and national parks across the U.S. The CCC built two shelters in Dallas – one at Flag Pole Hill on the north end of White Rock Lake and another at Bachman Lake – between 1935 and 1942 when the federal work relief program established a camp on White Rock Lake's eastern shore. Both of these structures eschewed the "National Park Rustic" style through the use of creamy Austin chalkstone, which was squared and dressed for a more refined appearance.

The 1960s saw Dallas' population grow by 20 percent, along with a similar increase in the number of new parks built in new subdivisions to serve the increased demand for recreational facilities. Between 1963 and 1970, the Park and Recreation Department designed and constructed a new prototype picnic shelter in 42 parks. Composed of four precast concrete T-beams supported on steel pipe columns, these utilitarian structures provided cheap, basic shelter to park users and were easy to erect. Although these picnic pavilions were considered "modern" during the 1960s, within 30 years they had deteriorated and were no longer considered an asset in many of the city's neighborhood parks.

"Pavilions" continued on page 59



Inspired Connection

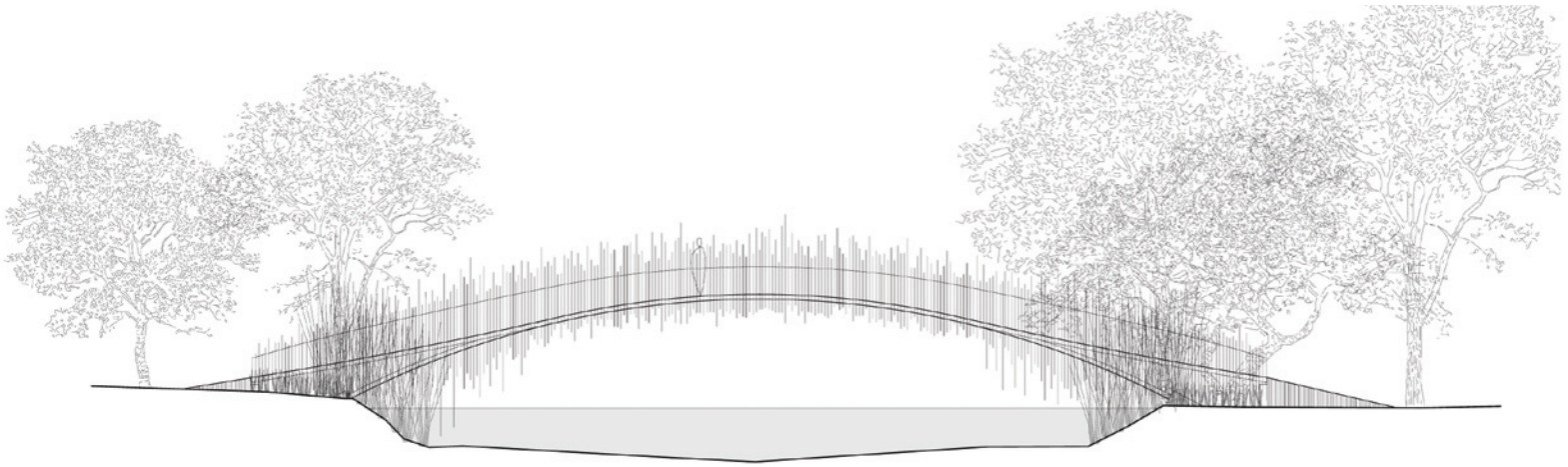
by LAWRENCE CONNOLLY, AIA

WITH the delightfully unexpected and resourceful use of materials, Miró Rivera Architects has designed and supervised construction of a footbridge over an inlet of Lake Austin that pays homage to the site's sensitive wetlands. The footbridge is the firm's third completed project of a master plan for an eight-acre lakefront site that includes a three-acre inlet/lagoon. Preceding the bridge were a boat house and a guest house, with the main house planned as the next – and largest – component of the complex. Half of the residential site is designated as wetlands that serve as a migratory stop for egrets, cranes, and swans, and as such the site is regulated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

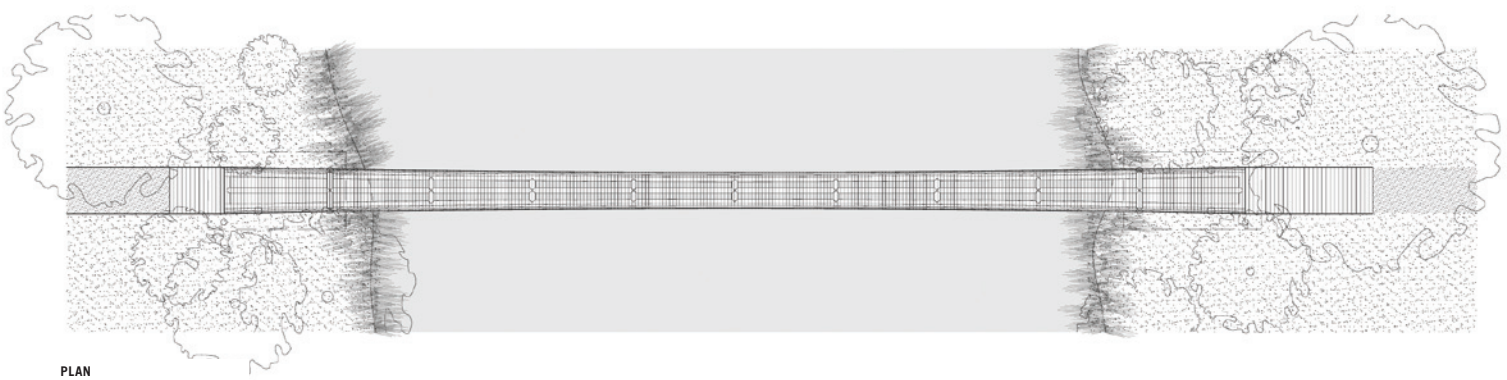
Reeds that grow along the water's edge were the inspiration for the bridge's contextual design. Because the ecosystem is delicate and because birds are attracted to the site, the insertion of the bridge was intended to disrupt the natural setting as little as possible. The architects' sympathetic approach was to span the 80-foot-wide waterway with three curvilinear five-inch-diameter tubes that support the walkway. They are in turn carried by a pair of five-inch-diameter tubes, also curvilinear, that connect at the eight-foot apex of the arch and flare to the four-foot width of the bridge's deck.

PROJECT Footbridge, Austin
CLIENT Withheld by request
ARCHITECT Miró Rivera Architects
DESIGN TEAM Juan Miró, AIA; Miguel Rivera, AIA; Brian Dillard; Abby Dacey
CONTRACTOR Crowell +
CONSULTANTS Architectural Engineers Collaborative (structural); Environmental Survey Consulting (landscape)
PHOTOGRAPHER Paul Finkel

Smooth half-inch steel rod dowels employed as stirrups, some turned up and some turned down, conjure the image of reeds that border the shoreline at either end of the footbridge.



ELEVATION



PLAN

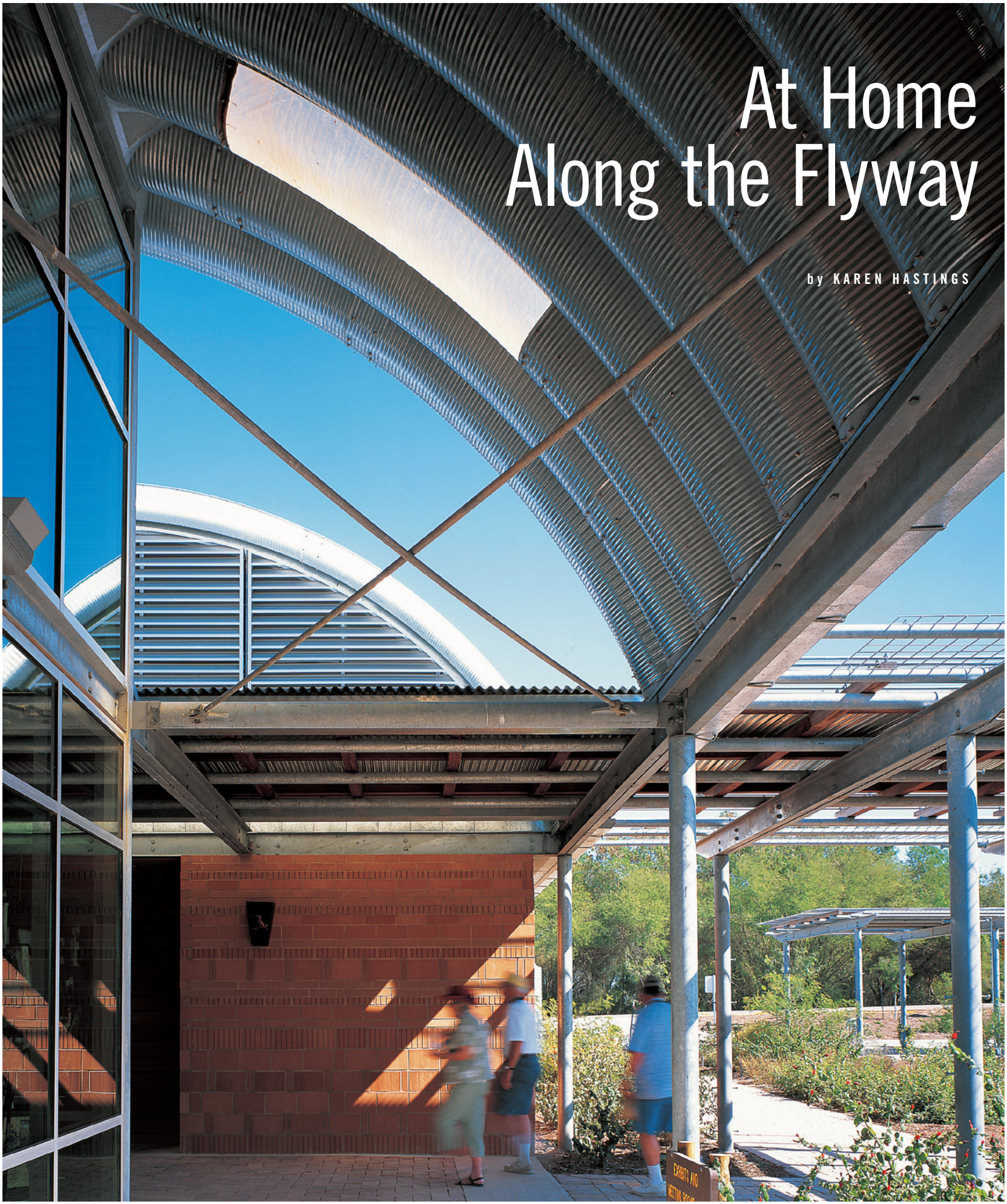
The bridge spans 80 feet over an inlet of Lake Austin to connect the owner's lakeside family residence with a guest house (in photo on opposite page) also designed by Miró Rivera Architects. The bridge is engineered for permanence, yet the architect deftly concealed its substantial steel structure underneath. The rusty steel dowels that comprise the deck were welded to the structure and their ends cut according to the architect's on-site instruction. The bridge recently won a 2006 AIA Small Project Award.

Approaching the bridge for the first time, it was unclear what material the irregularly configured guardrail is made out of. The narrow members seemed so natural that I thought they were wooden sticks of irregular lengths that were fastened together. Much to my surprise, the skinny, long, and bent pieces are smooth half-inch-diameter dowels fashioned as stirrups that randomly alternate upward and downward from the deck. Close to the water's edge, the rods extend down almost to water level, making them appear as if moss were hanging from the sides of the bridge. Another surprise is that the deck of closely spaced rods provides comfortable footing while allowing an uninterrupted view to the placid lagoon below. Because rusting metal probably isn't that appealing to the touch, the draped one-inch-diameter rope handrail is a welcome relief and a dramatic contrast to the rigid steel structure. The semi-transparent structure is left to naturally oxidize, making the steel a flat, blended rust color that quietly complements the natural character of the site. When asked if he had any concern about the metal corrosion prematurely resulting in the span's structural failure, Miró Rivera partner, Miguel Rivera, AIA, said the footbridge will be viable for more than 100 years.

Lawrence Connolly, AIA, is a *TA* contributing editor.

At Home Along the Flyway

by KAREN HASTINGS



JUST outside Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park in Mission – a rare oasis of wild riparian woodland in the widely cultivated Lower Rio Grande Valley – the new World Birding Center headquarters and visitors' center sits on 60 acres where onions were once farmed. The park attracts many types of feathered travelers, as well as other winged nomads. However, the two prevailing species seem to be bird-watchers and butterfly-watchers, both varieties outfitted with wide-brimmed hats, digital cameras, and binoculars. They mingle while waiting for the covered tram that will carry them into the park. Others comb the plantings of lantana, Turk's cap, and wild olive for rare specimens.

With a name like the World Birding Center, one might expect an expressive building that evokes the nature of winged creatures. Instead, Lake/Flato Architects and project architect Robert Harris, AIA, have placed the bird- and butterfly-friendly landscape ahead of architecture in a project that uses local materials, elegantly efficient design, and thoughtful attention to ranch-tech detail to celebrate the Valley's natural beauty.

Stepping out into the parking lot, visitors commence a stroll that leads through colorful butterfly gardens and toward the visitors' center just across Bentsen Palm Boulevard. A winding path prolongs the entry experience, which leads not to a building but through a trellis arbor and into another outdoor space. This one – a shallowly flooded garden surrounded by what someday will be a dense greenspace abundant with native plant species – is reminiscent of resacas (oxbow lakes) common to areas along the Rio Grande.

Around the gardens is a network of barrel-vaulted, Quonset-style corrugated steel arches set atop walls of warm D'Hanis brick and boards of salvaged cypress. The metal roofs extend to shelter deep outdoor hallways where rustic benches offer ample opportunities for lingering observations of wildlife activity in the pocket gardens. Encompassing 13,000 square feet, the cluster of buildings stretches out in two east-west lines parallel to an irrigation canal and the center's flyway border with

PROJECT World Birding Center, Bentsen–Rio Grande Valley State Park, Mission
CLIENT Texas Parks and Wildlife
ARCHITECT Lake/Flato Architects
DESIGN TEAM David Lake, FAIA; Robert Harris, AIA; Darryl Ohlenbusch, AIA; Isabel Mijangos; Roy Schweers; Heather Degrella; Margaret Sledge
CONTRACTOR SpawGlass; Wilson Construction
CONSULTANTS Architectural Engineers Collaborative (structural); Encotech Engineers (MEP); Rosa Finsley (landscape architect); Halff Associates (civil)
PHOTOGRAPHER Paul Hester

(opposite page) The material palette includes simple arched metal roof panels that overhang wide walkways. (this page) The roof system is efficiently designed to collect rainwater and provide shaded areas for visitors to linger outside, even during the hottest months.

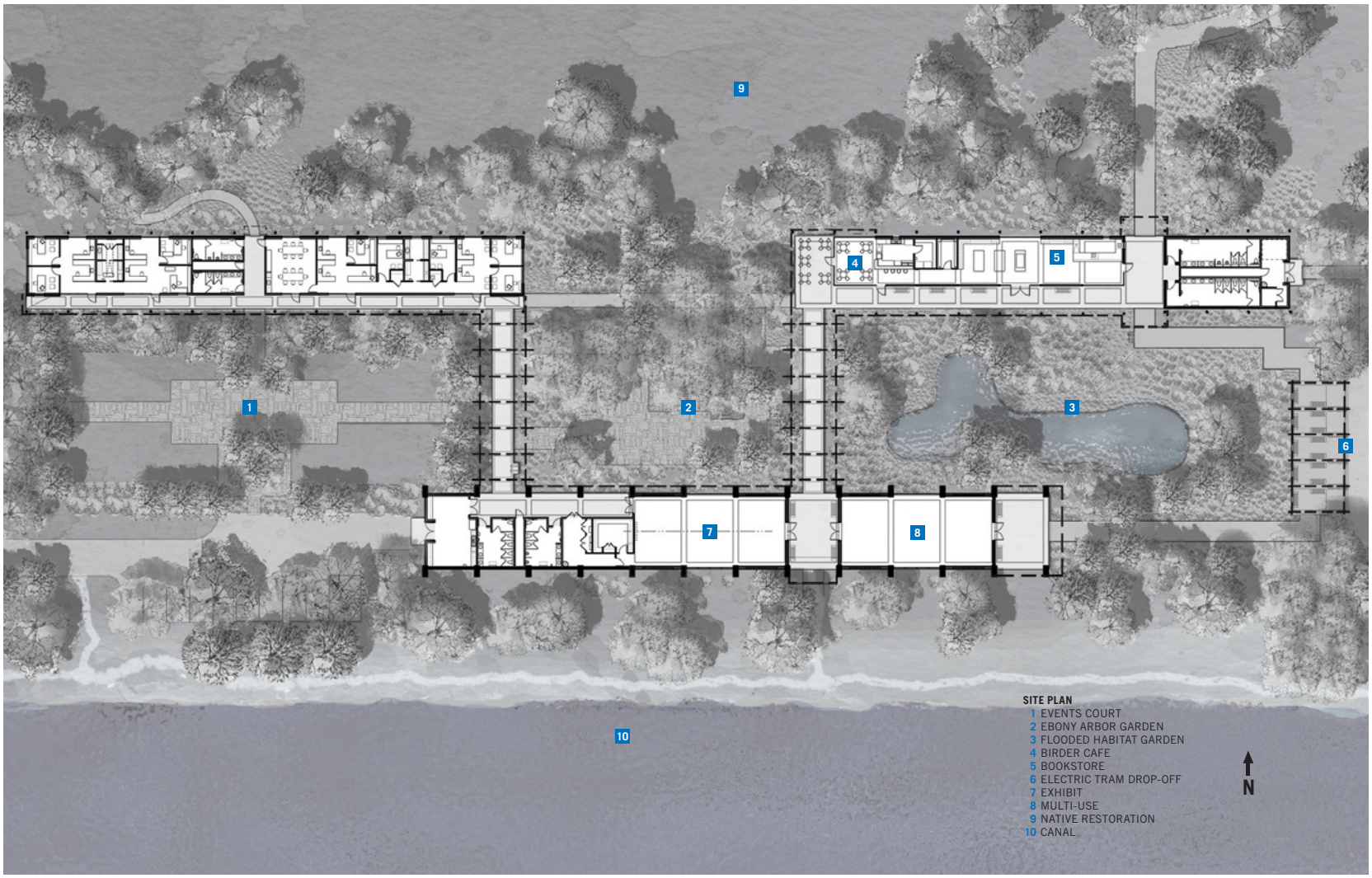
With commercial farming so extensive in the Valley, the architect drew inspiration from the region's many agricultural buildings. The canal alongside the new facility used to irrigate the 60-acre site when it was planted with onions.

the state park. The buildings are connected by walkways paved in local brick and shaded by metal arbors meant for flowering vines.

Eighteen corrugated steel tanks stand sentry, catching rainwater to be used in the headquarters' restored habitat. At the base of several of the 2,625-gallon cisterns, the seep, dribble, and spray of water is a constant attraction in this drought-stricken realm. Butterflies and dragonflies prefer the muddy seeps; birds are drawn to drip and splash.

A gift shop and cafe, exhibit hall, and adaptable meeting areas are closest to the visitors' entry, while an administrative building is farthest to the west, next to a square of grassy earth and extra parking, just right for catering trucks and tented events. It's not what some people expect, admits Harris, especially in the Lower Rio Grande Valley where architecture typically honors its colonial heritage with red tile roofs and colonnades. "What we were interested in was more the place than the object, especially in a nature center like this," Harris says. "The experience is what's important, and the experience is going into nature. We want our building to fit into that experience in an elegant way, and support that experience. We want it to be unique and interesting and meaningful, and to immerse them in the environment in the way many visitors' centers do not."

Harris resists naming a style for the steel and clay block structures he has designed. His inspiration came from images of the Valley's agricultural landscape, with its neat grid of roads, canals, and fields, punctuated with farm and ranch homesteads and their collection of outbuildings—humble, yet beautiful in their simplicity and efficiency. "It's not a style," he says. "It has its roots in the traditions of the agricultural context. It's an attempt to build upon the traditions of economical agricultural buildings, to learn from the efficiencies seen in those buildings, but at the same time to provide an appropriate fit into the environment." Harris adds that these types of structures have been used in South Texas agriculture since before World War II. "They're rugged and robust in order to stand up to the environment in which they live. There is an elegance and beauty in their efficiency and



economy that is often overlooked," Harris says. "What we're trying to do is take the good qualities of that building type and add the good qualities we wanted to imbue in these buildings."

With a preference for local materials, Lake/Flato designed the headquarters and visitor's center with energy efficiency and sustainability in mind. Cisterns save on water usage. Tall windows maximize views to the north, while louvers, tinted glass, and deep porches tame the summer heat and light. Also, the structural steel shell roof uses 48 percent less steel by weight than a truss-style roof, and the roof panels arrived nested together like spoons, requiring fewer truck loads. Like the galvanized metal arbors, they are bolted together and can be moved, replaced, or added onto with minimal effort. In addition, chest-high bronze path-lights line the walkway entrance, avoiding wasteful nighttime light pollution with full cut-off shields. Punched copper sconces along interior pathways feature images of indigenous birds.

With its flooded garden and butterfly-friendly entrance, the headquarters forms a transition from disturbed agricultural fields and nearby residential development to the pristine acreage of Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park. Colorful flags mark dense plantings around the headquarters that will slowly mature into native habitat. Rather than optional "landscaping," these plantings are as integral to the design as the buildings themselves. "We don't feel like the buildings are complete unless they're integrated into the landscape," Harris says. "We would never have done it this way without the landscape. It wouldn't make sense without it. Neither one is more important than the other; they work together."

Harris looks forward to revisiting his design in a few years, when climbing vines and habitat restoration have worked their magic. "The building in essence disappears," he says. "I couldn't be happier if, as you approach this place, you see just a silver sliver of roof—and nothing but green."

Karen Hastings is a freelance writer in Harlingen.

RESOURCES MASONRY VENEER ASSEMBLIES: D'Hanis Brick & Tile

Designed for bird-watchers, the visitors' center offers a multitude of spaces to observe wildlife activity, from the glass-enclosed café to the shaded walkways that connect the buildings.

World Birding Center

MORE than 500 species of birds, with the river woodlands and thorny brushland that shelters them, are star attractions of the World Birding Center in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. More than one place, much less a single building, the center was conceived as a collection of nine independent nature preserves, stretching from the beaches of South Padre Island to the thorny hills of Starr County. Envisioned as a haven for birdwatchers, the network of facilities is aligned along flyways of migratory species. Those who love to watch, listen to, and learn about birds can encounter many impressive varieties – including Valley "specialties" like the Green Jay, the Great Kiskadee, the Green Kingfisher, and the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl – that make the southern tip of Texas such an international nature attraction.

Information on all the amenities within the World Birding Center network is available at www.worldbirdingcenter.org.

The nine facilities that comprise the World Birding Center are:

1. Roma Bluffs – 77 Convent Street, Roma
2. Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park – Bentsen Palm Drive (FM 2062), Mission
3. Quinta Mazatlan – 600 Sunset Avenue, McAllen
4. Old Hidalgo Pumphouse – 902 S. Second Street, Hidalgo
5. Edinburg Scenic Wetlands – 14 S. Raul Longoria, Edinburg
6. Estero Llano Grande State Park – 3301 S. International Blvd. (FM 1015), Weslaco
7. Harlingen Arroyo Colorado (Hugh Ramsey Park) – 1001 S. Loop 499, Harlingen
8. Resaca de la Palma State Park – four miles west of Brownsville on State Highway 281
9. South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center – 7355 Padre Blvd, South Padre Island

TEXAS ARCHITECT

Healthful Hospitality

by NESTOR INFANZÓN, FAIA

PROJECT Baylor Regional Medical Center at Plano
CLIENT Baylor Health Care System
ARCHITECT Page Southerland Page
DESIGN TEAM Mattia Flabiano III, AIA; Joshua A. Theodore; W. Dee Maxey, AIA; William E. Phillips; E. Lynn Broyles; Dale Robinson
CONTRACTOR MEDCO Construction
CONSULTANTS HBC Engineering (geotechnical); Newman Jackson Bieberstein (landscape architect); Raymond L. Goodson Jr., Inc. (civil); Brockette-Davis-Drake (structural); H.G. Rice and Company (food service); Help International (medical equipment)
PHOTOGRAPHERS Craig Blackmon, FAIA; Yunjoo Namkoong

THE new Baylor Regional Medical Center is one of those institutional facilities that challenges visitors to peel away its layers for a better appreciation of the project and its context.

To fully appreciate the building requires an understanding of the combination of factors that led to its conception, specifically those related to statistics that forebode a healthcare crisis in Texas. Among those factors are the rapidly expanding growth of the state's major cities and the large number of aging baby boomers with the financial means to demand an enhanced level of service for their healthcare needs. The result is an environment in which existing healthcare systems must expand and update their facilities, and in no area of the state is this more relevant than the ever-sprawling fringes of Dallas. Suburbs north of the city, including Plano, Frisco, Allen, and The Colony, are finding that their residents want more direct access to major medical centers such as the Dallas-based Baylor Health Care System. Plano has satisfied this demand with the December opening of the Baylor Regional Medical Center.

Located in Plano just east of Preston Road, the medical center unfolds before the visitor in a carefully orchestrated way as planned by the design team. From an aesthetics viewpoint, the visitor must reconcile the contrast between the massive parking garage's minimal articulation and the finely detailed buildings that house the hospital and medical offices. This resulted because the medical center is an island surrounded by other properties and right-of-ways, a condition of constrainment that disallowed a more human-scaled approach sequence. However, this condition afforded the design team the opportunity to create a complex better suited to a dense urban site than a suburban site, such as composing an internal set of boulevards intended to inspire an inner-city pedestrian context. Intimately scaled, richly textured facades and landscape amenities help make this concept work, which is significant to the visitor's introduction to the facility. Use of a long canopy at the drop-off

area in lieu of the traditional porte-cochere also lends a more pedestrian flair to the hospital building. The office building lacks similar flair, yet it serves well for the drop-off and pick-up of patients. To this visitor the only aspect of the design that seems unresolved are the street-level graphics and wayfinding system: each lacks the rich textural qualities of the buildings.

The non-institutional expression of the buildings is among the medical center's most welcome attributes. In particular, the office building's extremely rational facade recalls Aldo Rossi's Hotel Il Palazzo in Fukuoka, Japan. Orthogonal arches anchor the heavy brick facade articulated with a simple grid of windows and capped with a recessed top floor of metal and glass. The office building's articulation offers an exceptional counterpoint to the composition of the hospital's facade—a blend of brick, metal, glass, and aluminum—that might easily be mistaken for a resort hotel. Although both buildings have comparable base, middle, and top compositions, each relies on unique and distinctive variation to generate a harmonious dialogue between them. But the fact that each building has developed its individual presence begs the question: Why can't one become background for the other to establish a clear hierarchy? That may be a moot point since both buildings are so well integrated within the overall context, thus creating a well-balanced complex.

As with the site, the hospital building is organized around two intersecting streets. Each serves to visually engage the occupants with the outdoor landscape amenities, another significant aspect of the medical center's non-institutional quality. From the moment visitors enter the hospital via the canopied walkway, they are treated to a procession of landscape features that includes an outdoor "healing garden." Once inside, visitors are enveloped by interior surfaces of rich wood tone and soft colors complemented with colorful paintings and large glass sculptures of flowers. Public areas and transitional corridors are enhanced by high-quality finishes and fine art.

(opposite page) Patient rooms in the hospital tower open to views of the medical center's extensive landscaped grounds. (this page) Comparable yet distinctively different, the compositions of the hospital and the medical office building, shown at far right, create an engaging visual dialogue. The parking garage is visible in the background.

SITE PLAN

1 MEDICAL OFFICES (8 LEVELS)
2 HOSPITAL TOWER (5 LEVELS)
3 HOSPITAL (3 LEVELS)
4 'HEALING GARDEN'
5 FUTURE HEART HOSPITAL
6 GENERAL PLANT
7 PARKING GARAGE
8 FUTURE MEDICAL OFFICES

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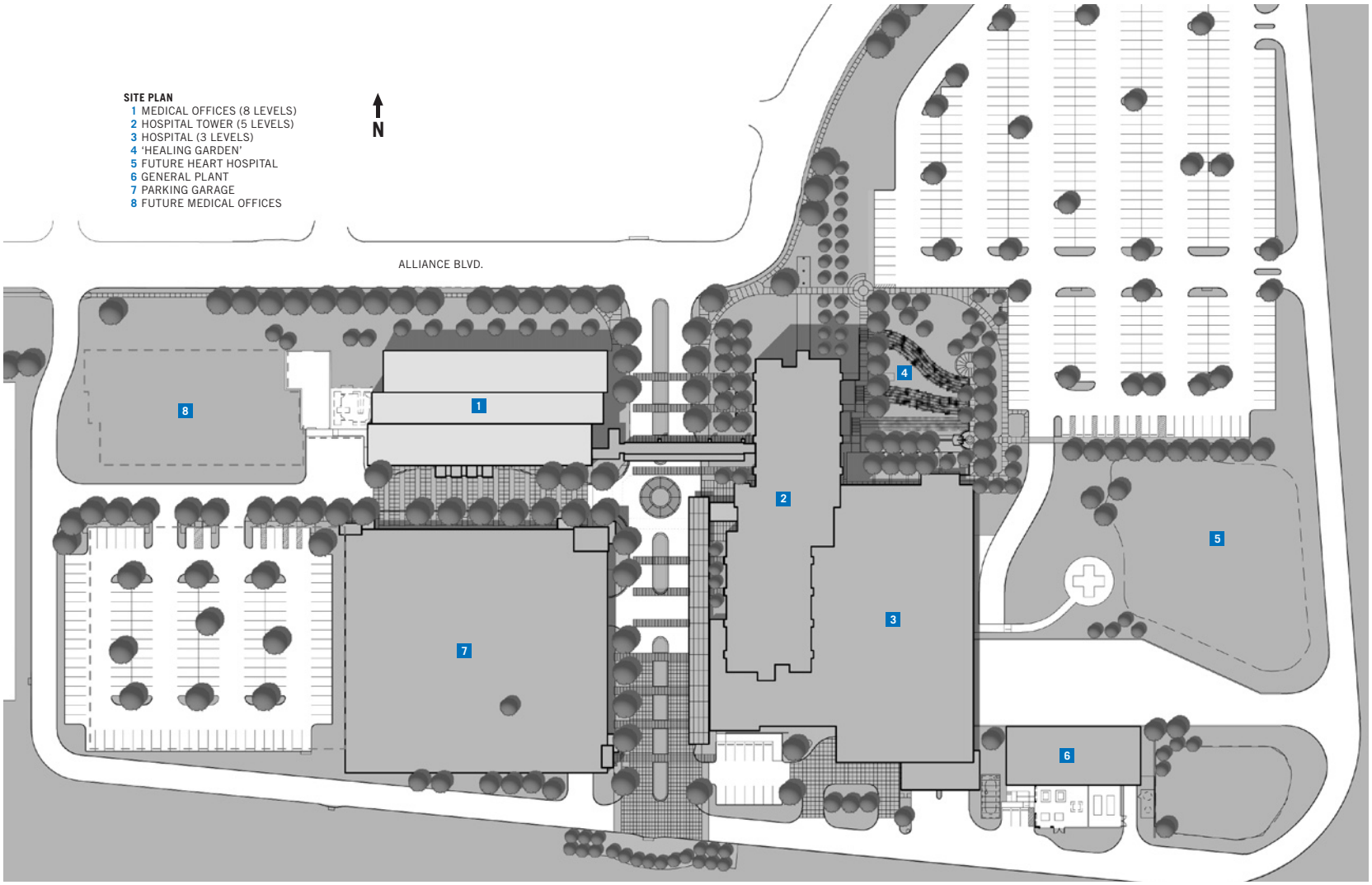
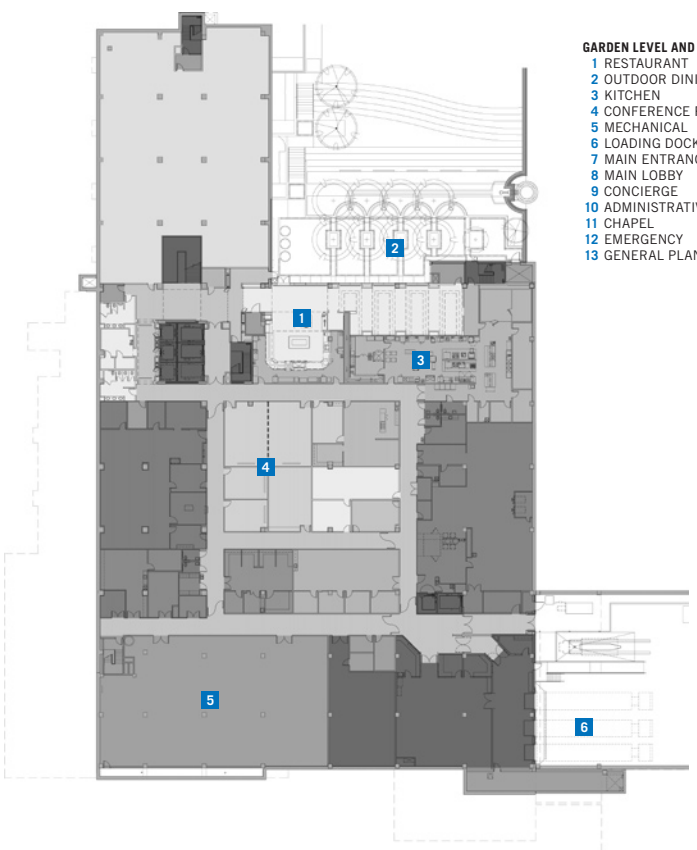
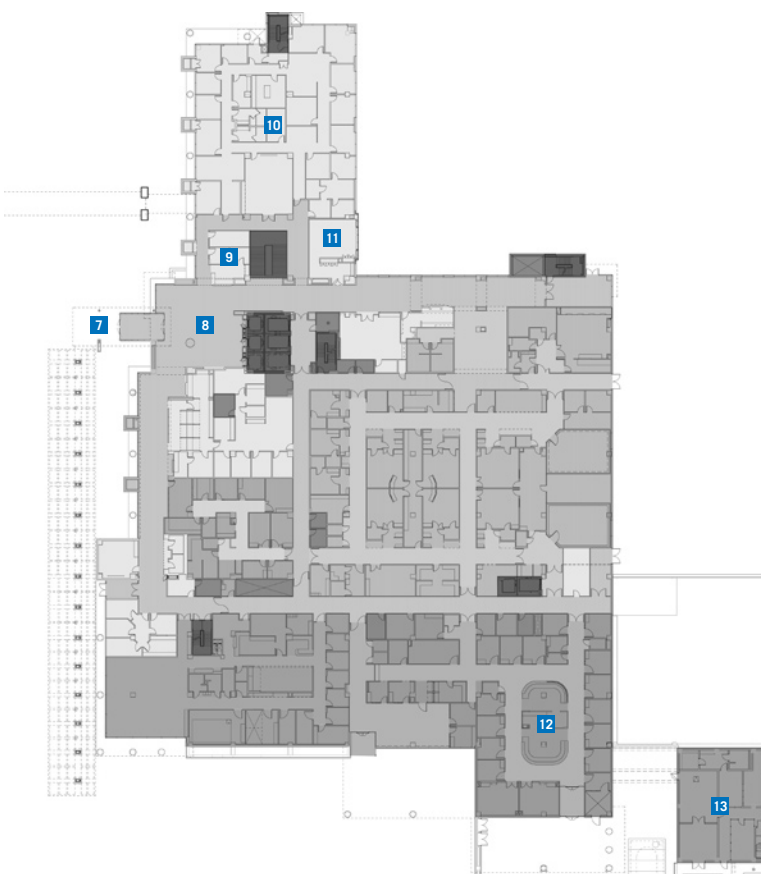
ALLIANCE BLVD.





GARDEN LEVEL AND FIRST FLOOR PLANS

1 RESTAURANT
2 OUTDOOR DINING
3 KITCHEN
4 CONFERENCE ROOMS
5 MECHANICAL
6 LOADING DOCK
7 MAIN ENTRANCE
8 MAIN LOBBY
9 CONCIERGE
10 ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
11 CHAPEL
12 EMERGENCY
13 GENERAL PLANT



Stationed in the main lobby is a concierge, along with private areas for client counseling and patient check in and check out. Also similar to many metropolitan hotels are the retail amenities accessible along the main circulation spine. A two-level outdoor patio is the focal point for the facility's first and second floors, which will become the connecting point for the hospital and the future heart hospital tower currently under construction. This gently cascading patio doubles as an outdoor dining area adjacent to the cafeteria. From the vantage point of the patio, the visitor can experience the hospital building's courtyard and notice the facade's singular accent—a rectangular piece of Texas limestone that denotes the site of the ground-floor chapel.

Special nuggets of hospitality-like amenities – such as richly textured carpets, colorful wall and ceiling finishes, and a business center – support the idea that this is more than an ordinary medical center. That notion is carried through the patient rooms where entire walls of glass, flat-screen televisions, and custom-built wooden headboards impart a sense of luxury. One of the most intriguing elements of the hospital's design is how the floor plans for each level are shifted at the central core, which allowed notches to be carved at the end of corridors where windows allow occupants outdoor views. These tweaks to the design demonstrate how little effort it takes to make architecture that enriches the human spirit.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this project is how it encourages dialogue among patients, administrators, program managers, real estate managers, and architects about healthcare design. Speaking to patients, hospital staff, and the facility's administrators, everyone seems to share the same feelings about this project. Jerri Garison, the president of Baylor Regional Medical Center at Plano, best articulates that mutual sentiment: "They love this building."

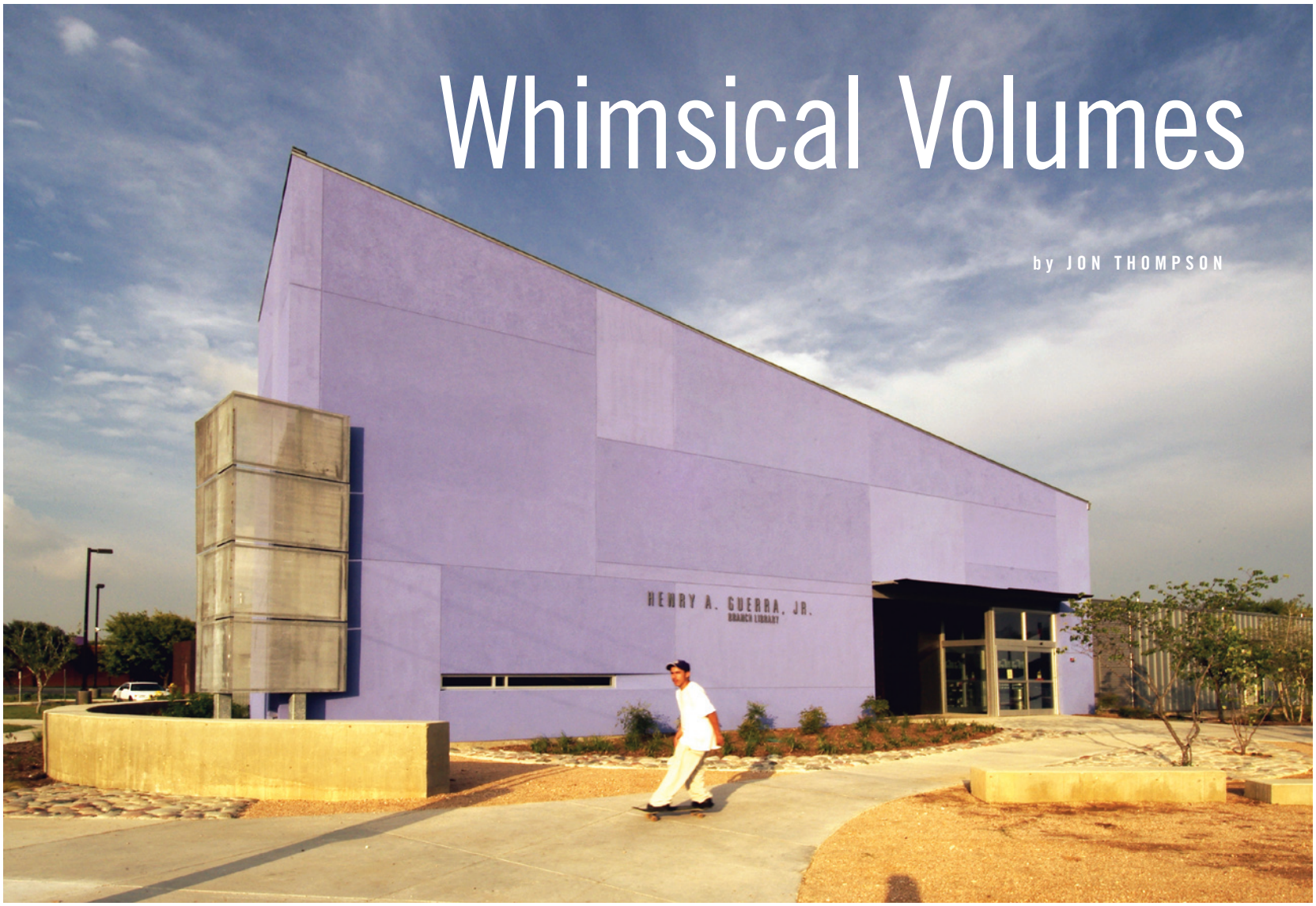
Nestor Infanzón, FAIA, practices with Jonathan Bailey Associates in Dallas. He is a contributing editor of *Texas Architect*.

Interiors in the public areas, as well as a concierge desk, dispel familiar notions of the typical hospital.

RESOURCES STONE: International Granite & Marble; UNIT MASONRY WALL ASSEMBLIES: Blackson Brick; RAILINGS AND HANDRAILS: Trinity Metal; ARCHITECTURAL WOODWORK: MEDCO Millwork; CONCRETE PAVEMENT: Lattimore Materials Co.; WATERPROOFING AND DAMPPROOFING: CETCO Building Materials; WATER REPELLANTS: CETCO Building Materials; MEMBRANE ROOFING: Johns Manville International; MOISTURE PROTECTION: JDR Enterprises; METAL DOORS AND FRAMES: Steelcraft; SPECIALTY DOORS: Dor-O-Matic Automatic Sliding Doors; ACCESS DOORS AND PANELS: Nystrom Building Products; ENTRANCES AND STOREFRONTS: Vistawall; GLASS: Viracon; GLAZED CURTAINWALL: Vistawall; GYPSUM BOARD FRAMING AND ACCESSORIES: G-P Gypsum; GYPSUM FABRICATIONS: USG Corporation; TILE: Nevamar; TERRAZZO: American Terrazzo; FLUID APPLIED FLOORING: Stonhard; INTUMESCENT FIRE PROOFING AND PAINTS: Isolatek; GRILLES AND SCREENS: Nystrom; PROTECTIVE COVERS: Korogard; WIRE MESH PARTITIONS: Wire Crafters; OPERABLE PARTITIONS: Skyfold, Guilford of Maine; ACCESS FLOORING: Formica; LABORATORY CASEWORK: Fisher Hamilton MGC; BULLET-RESISTANT PROTECTION: North American Bullet Proof

Whimsical Volumes

by JON THOMPSON



PROJECT Henry A. Guerra, Jr. Branch Library, San Antonio
CLIENT City of San Antonio
ARCHITECT Sprinkle Robey Architects
DESIGN TEAM Davis Sprinkle, AIA; Thom Robey, AIA; Jeff Langham; Alan Neff
CONTRACTOR All Construction
CONSULTANTS Slay Engineering (civil); Lizcano Consulting Engineers (MEP); AccuTech Consultants (structural); Bender Wells Clark (landscape architects); Fugro South (geotechnical); Accessibility Unlimited (plan review); Edens (code/life safety)
PHOTOGRAPHER Paul Hester

ARCHITECTURE in San Antonio was once identified by a palette of materials and colors established by O'Neil Ford based on his appreciation of regional building traditions. Responding to the modernist ethos that demanded an honest expression of materials, this "natural" palette combined Central Texas limestone, a standing-seam metal roof, and wood with the grain stained rather than hidden under a coat of paint. Then, in 1995, came the San Antonio Central Library designed by Ricardo Legorreta, FAIA. The intense color of its EIFS exterior prompted the local paper to sponsor a contest to name that hue: "enchilada red" won. A common criticism of the building was that its blaring color ran contrary to the honest use of materials so indicative of San Antonio architecture. That would quickly change.

The Henry A. Guerra, Jr. Library by Sprinkle Robey Architects continues the newly evolving tradition of colored stucco buildings in San Antonio, but the color in this instance is purple and the box has become a wedge. Also, the palette has expanded to include a variety of metal skins, perhaps a permutation of the traditional standing-seam roof. Not surprisingly, Sprinkle Robey was one of the local partners with Legorreta in the design of the Central Library.

The Guerra Library is one of several new branches built with local bond money that became available in 1999. Located on Military Drive West, the branch library serves an area traditionally identified with Kelly Air Force Base. The working-class neighborhood is a nondescript stretch of asphalt lined with 1960s-era strip centers and tire shops. The architects realized early in the process that there was no "there" there; that is, no building tradition within which to work. How, then, could one create a contextual building when the context was so haphazard?

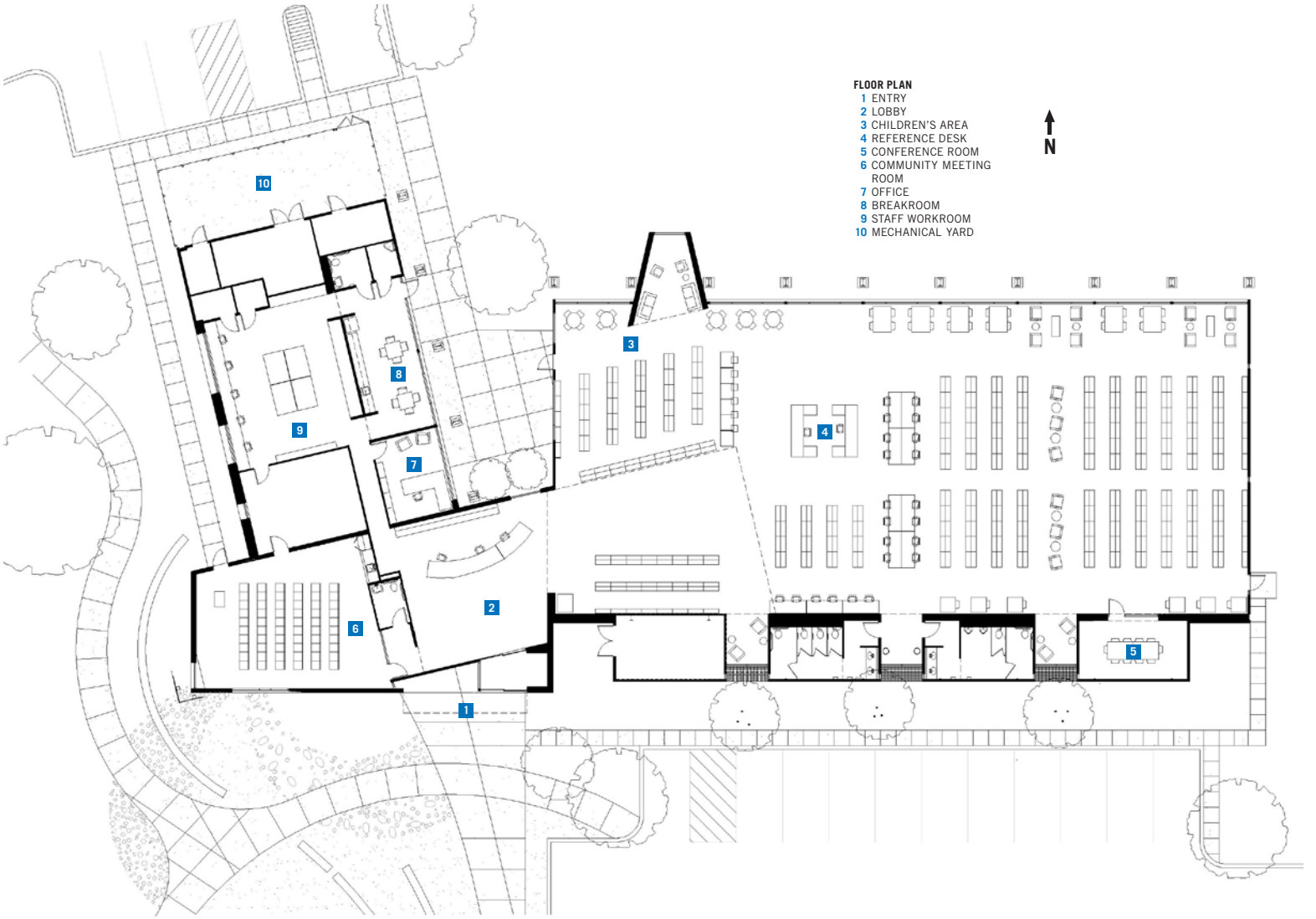
Rather than blending with the immediate surroundings, it was decided that the library should stand as a landmark along the street. A slight curve in the road enhanced the effect, with a long

stretch of Military Drive centered on the library before veering to the left. The purple mass of the building acts as an intermediate goal, a node – if not a place – along the way. The purple hue – called periwinkle by the architects – is bright and bold and yet has a contextual quality in that it almost blends with the sky. This purple wedge, rising toward the street, is nearly windowless, heightening its landmark quality.

After parking and approaching the library, one discovers that the rest of the building, to the back of the lot, is clad in vertical panels of standing-seam metal finished in a gray close in tone to raw bead-blasted steel. It reflects well the purple of the adjacent stucco. The application of roof technology to wall sheathing is a trend that is translating prosaic pre-engineered building technology into a new architectural vocabulary. The pragmatics of metal and synthetic stucco establish pared-down detailing, forcing the architect to find new ways to bring visual delight to the design, as well as innovative articulation that expresses the parts and yet joins them into a convincing whole. Sprinkle Robey accomplished this articulation through a tight handling of off-the-shelf metal components, and by manipulating the control joints required by large planes of stucco. The architects used the control joints to create a Mondrian-esque pattern of offset rectangles in the purple stucco. The stucco was then applied in three different textures, creating subtle reflective variations in a material often considered intrinsically featureless.

Likewise, the metal skin is used to articulate recessed window niches in the south facade, where corrugated-metal siding runs horizontally rather than vertically. By repeating the horizontal corrugations on the back and north side of the building, the architects transform the standing-seam siding on the south facade into a formal statement that marks it as the front of the building. The horizontal orientation also creates strong shadow lines that add visual interest. The building expands

(this page) Wedge-shaped and faced in periwinkle stucco, the new branch library creates its own idiosyncratic context in a non-descript San Antonio neighborhood. (opposite page) A fanciful, bright orange reading nook draws attention to the children's area.



this vocabulary by using rusted steel panels to form a small courtyard, visible from the street, around the mechanical equipment. The rusty orange of this enclosure picks up the only other stucco color on the building—an orange, angled cubical that projects from the north side, an aberration that makes sense only after one has entered the library.

The library's entry is deceptively simple but carefully detailed. At first it appears as a dark, almost graphic, hole in the building, but this turns out to be another use of unprimered metal panels. The actual storefront doorway is called out by a very slight projection in the thin steel lip that protects the entry. A narrow entry lock opens to the lobby, a space enlivened by a wall installation by artist Henry Stein who set found objects in an ordered grid that create their own visual language, a metaphor for words written on the page.

Turning immediately to the right, one sees the library proper, with rows of books under a broad shed roof. Exposed fluorescent lights provide utilitarian but effective illumination for the reading area. One section of lights seems to have broken loose into a jumble suspended from the ceiling. This pickup-sticks arrangement marks the children's area where a kid-scaled reading nook projects out through the north wall like an oversized window box. Forced perspective makes children appear to grow taller as they move into the box and out of the main stacks area. This intimately scaled room within a room is brightly colored, explaining the enigmatic orange cubicle first seen from outside.

The shed roof of the main library space slopes upward toward the north, where much of the wall is open to the natural light. Indirect north light floods the area, making it both functional as a reading area and emotionally satisfying. The large steel roof beams, adapted from a pre- engineered

RESOURCES METAL DECKING: Vulcraft; **SOLID POLYMER FABRICATIONS:** Avonite; **VAPOR RETARDERS:** Henry; **METAL ROOFING:** Berridge; **ENTRANCES AND STOREFRONTS:** Vistawall; **PLASTIC GLAZING:** CPI International; **TILE:** Daltile; **BLINDS, SHUTTERS, AND SHADES :** Mecho; **EXTERIOR STUCCO PLASTER FINISH (ENTRY NODE) :** Degussa

building, pass through this wall to be supported by freestanding wide-flange columns outside—the epitome of the structuralist ideal.

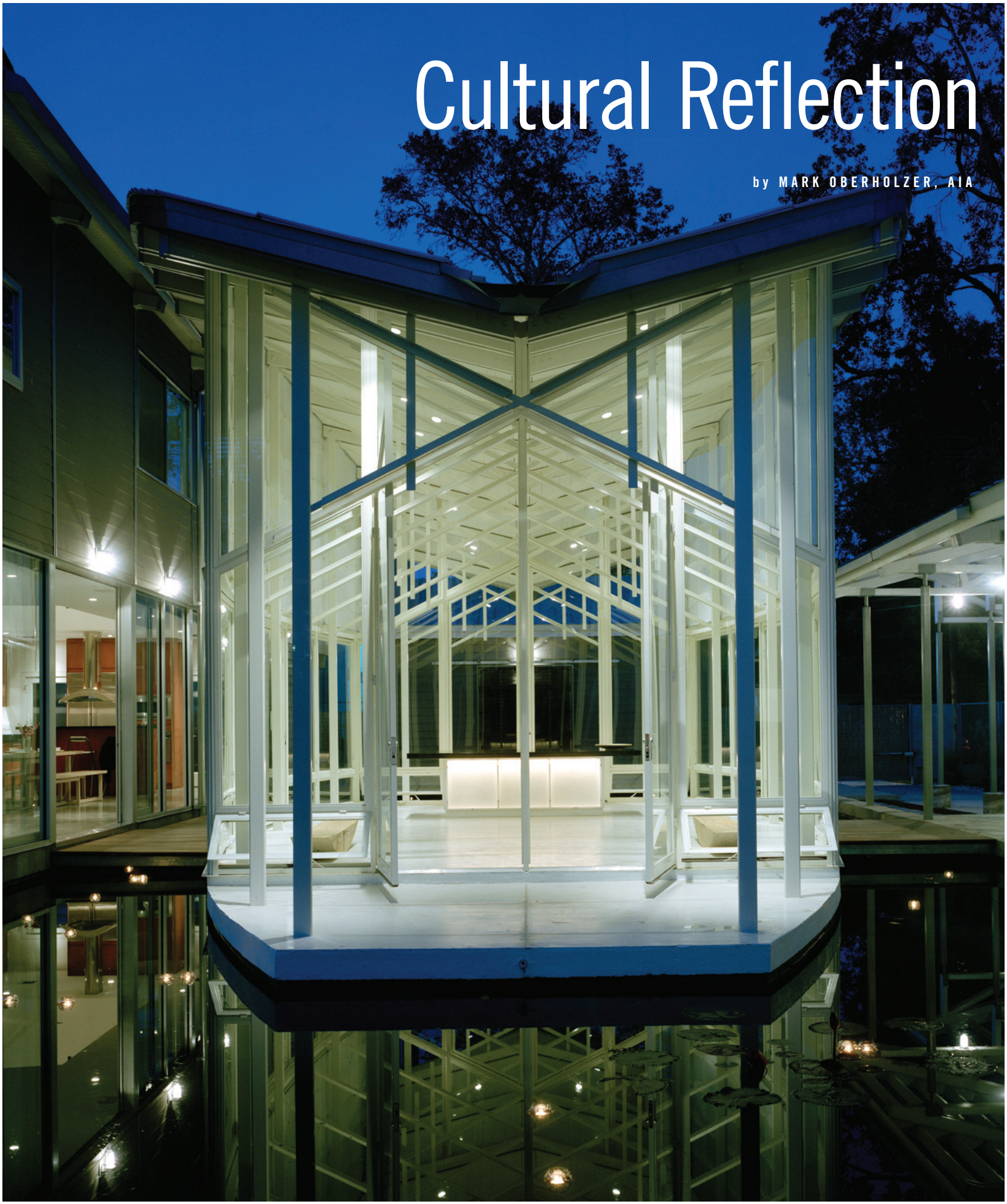
Even though red has now been accepted as part of the San Antonio skyline, Legorreta's Central Library is still criticized for not responding to its immediate context. The same could be said of the Guerra Library by Sprinkle Robey. Both criticisms would be misplaced. The Guerra Library is, in fact, contextual when one considers that it is oriented specifically to take advantage of the north light. More importantly, the Sprinkle Robey design, located in a suburban neighborhood that is all but formless, turns to the evolving local vernacular of industrial materials and finishes that have been redefined for a post-industrial age. The Guerra Library also must be seen as natural if one considers the human nature that it expresses. It is, in the final analysis, a thoughtful building where one can enjoy the time spent reading a good book.

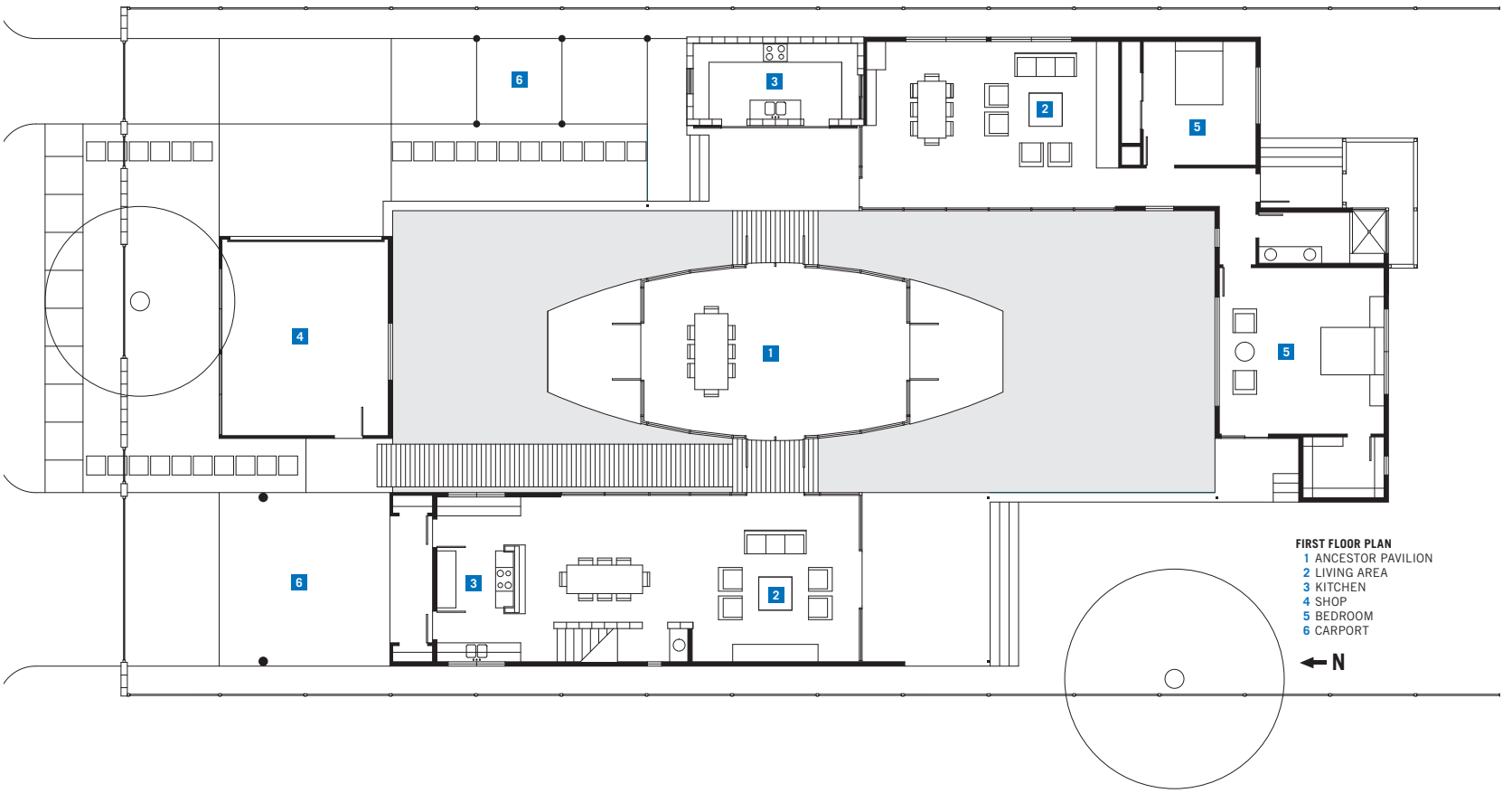
Jon Thompson is an associate professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio's College of Architecture.

Generous glazing along the north wall suffuses the reading areas and stack space with soft natural light.

Cultural Reflection

by MARK OBERHOLZER, AIA





MORE than any other aspect of nature, water has forced its way into the collective consciousness of Gulf Coast cities with the threat of frequent floods and heavy rains during each hurricane season. While most designers think of water as something to be shed as quickly as possible from a building and its site, brothers Chung Nguyen, AIA, and Chuong Nguyen of MC² Architects have conceived a remarkable double residence in Houston whose central feature is a pavilion surrounded by a man-made rainwater pond.

Located on a quiet street just inside Houston's inner loop, the house is a marked departure from a typical single-family home—it's a multi-generational compound that houses Chuong's young family as well as his parents. After fleeing Vietnam in 1975, the Nguyen family put down Texas roots, culminating in the construction of this compound where a large extended family often gathers. The project, built by the family's seven children, represents an attempt to adapt Vietnamese customs to life in Houston.

From the street, the house presents crisp volumes modestly clad in cement board siding behind a wall of split-faced concrete block. An axial view between the volumes offers a glimpse of the central space beyond, enclosed loosely by two L-shaped buildings.

The smaller, single-story building wraps around the southeast corner of the site and houses the architects' parents. Walls of continuous glass light the living spaces and focus views toward the pond. This house's only kitchen is completely outdoors, set within walls of concrete block that form the end of the parents' carport, or "car porch" as the brothers refer to it. The master bedroom occupies the south side of the pond, and doors lead on one side to a small porch adjacent to the pond and on the other to a private garden. The house is clearly designed to facilitate living outside as much as possible.

The north and west sides of the pond are defined by Chuong's two-story house. Modestly sized indoor living areas are supplemented by a large south-facing covered porch, which Chung calls the "Texas living room." Bedrooms on the second floor open to small porches for immediate outdoor access. The two-story wing shields the pond from western sunlight, and windows that face west are fitted with galvanized metal shades to filter the harsh afternoon sun. A tall workshop – Chuong has designed and built most of the furnishings for both houses – defines the north side of the pond.

Although the two houses effectively enclose the central pond, they do so with an informality that still leaves the space partially open to the surrounding neighbors, resulting in a pleasant combination of privacy and openness.

PROJECT Nguyen Residence, Houston
CLIENT Chuong Q. B. Nguyen
ARCHITECT MC² Architects
DESIGN TEAM Chung Q. B. Nguyen, AIA; Chuong Q. B. Nguyen; Lyndon Garcia; Sophia Bowen; Kris Graham
CONTRACTOR MC² Architects & Construction
CONSULTANT Carlos Gutierrez (PE)
PHOTOGRAPHER Richard Payne, FAIA

(opposite page) Viewed here from the north, the ancestor pavilion appears to float on the surface of the pond at the center of the family compound. Angled rooftops replenish the pond with rainfall runoff.

The pond itself is a large, simple rectangle enclosed by concrete retaining walls. Soil excavated to form the pond was used to raise the ground elevation of the houses. The houses' metal roofs all angle down to the pond, replenishing it with rainwater. In Houston, houses are not required to manage on-site runoff, but the Nguyen compound gives the notion of rainwater detention an artful expression. Pipe spouts built into the concrete retaining wall maintain the pond's surface at a constant level by allowing excess rainwater to escape. A school of koi happily inhabits the water, sharing it with water lilies.

Appearing to gently float on the surface of the pond upon a thin concrete plane, the ancestor pavilion at the center of the family compound is a dramatic contrast to the simple, rectilinear volumes of the surrounding houses. As the spiritual center of the house, the pavilion's bowed shape and leaf-like roof is framed by white-painted wood and steel. The pavilion is evocative of a boat pausing briefly at dock, an impression reinforced by the gray wood walkways that link the pavilion to the houses. The lower areas of the structure are clad in clear glass while the upper surfaces diffuse natural light through translucent fiberglass. Inspired by an eleventh-century pagoda in Hanoi that is surrounded by a lake, the Nguyen's pavilion is a light-filled gathering place. An air handler is tucked discreetly beneath a stone tabletop to provide occasional air conditioning. The pavilion's roof slopes toward the center and ends with a projecting scupper that throws an arc of water into the pond during rainstorms.

Except for the movement of fish, the surface of the pond is usually quite still, acting as a reflecting pool that mirrors the image of the ancestor pavilion, which is especially dramatic at night. The surface of the pond takes on the color of the sky, its stillness inviting reflection while at the same time serving as a lingering reminder of the beauty and immense power of water.

Mark Oberholzer, AIA, practices with the Wittenberg Oberholzer Architects and teaches at Rice University's School of Architecture.

RESOURCES FENCES, GATES, AND HARDWARE: Ross Metal Work; **MASONRY UNITS:** Southwest Concrete Products; **UNIT MASONRY WALL ASSEMBLIES:** Southwest Concrete Products; **ARCHITECTURAL METAL WORK:** Ross Metal Work; **RAILINGS AND HANDRAILS:** Ross Metal Work; **PRE-FABRICATED STRUCTURAL WOOD:** American Truss; **GLASS-FIBER REINFORCED PLASTICS:** American Acrylics; **SOLID POLYMER FABRICATIONS:** American Acrylics; **SIDING:** Hardi Plank; **METAL ROOFING:** Universal Sheet Metal; **FASCIA AND SOFFIT PANELS:** Hardi Plank; **METAL DOORS AND FRAMES:** Henry Glass; **ENTRANCES AND STOREFRONTS:** Henry Glass; **METAL WINDOWS:** Action Window; **GLASS:** Henry Glass; **STRUCTURAL GLASS CURTAINWALL:** Ross Metal Work

(opposite page) Simple interior spaces combine informal living areas with immediate access to the outdoors. (this page) Seen from the south, the compound's luminous central pavilion illustrates how the family has adapted Vietnamese customs to life in Houston.

Garland ISD Special Events Center

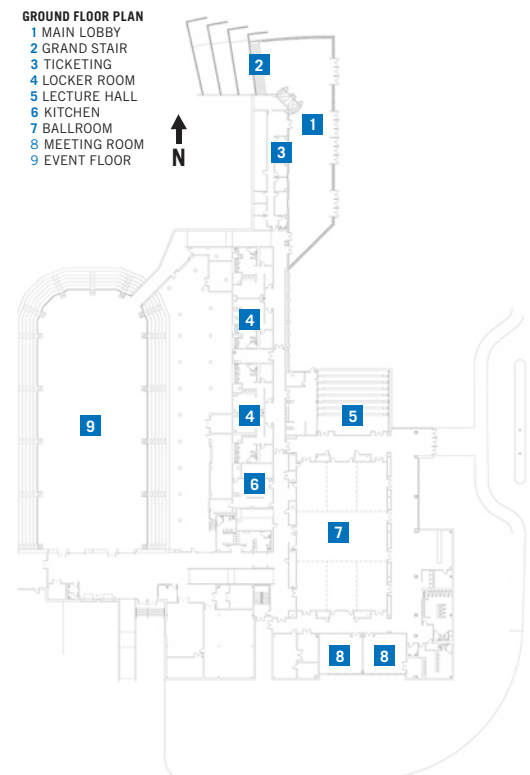
PROJECT Garland ISD Special Events Center, Garland
CLIENT Garland Independent School District
ARCHITECT HKS, Inc.
CONTRACTOR Lee Lewis Construction, Inc.
CONSULTANTS Walter P. Moore (structural); Blum Consulting Engineers (MEP); RLK Engineering (civil); Grubbs Ramsey (landscape); Elert & Associates (audio/visual); HKS, Inc. (environmental graphics)
PHOTOGRAPHER Blake Marvin

In designing the Garland ISD Special Events Center, HKS architect Dan Phillips aimed to create a non-traditional structure that would provide an energetic space for school and community events. As a result, the distinctively designed assembly and conferencing center, opened in August 2005, looks more like a state-of-the-art performance hall than a typical school field house. Contributing to the center's modern vernacular, the building's curved exterior incorporates large expanses of glass that allow ample natural light into the facility and provide visual connectivity to the outdoors. The facade and sloped metal roof are designed in accord with the curvature of the neighboring street, while other sloping design elements are employed with the interior spaces to express continuity. Once inside the 190,000-sf center, a dramatic multi-story lobby welcomes patrons, while a grand stair ushers them to the main performance stage. At night, the building is enhanced by a lighting system projecting multi-colored lights on the interior and exterior walls. With 7,000 fixed seats and on-site parking, the new events center allows the school district to host large-scale events, including regional and national sports tournaments, fine arts performances, concerts, and commencement ceremonies. The multi-use building is also open to the public for community events. The conferencing area, located on the first floor, includes a tiered lecture hall, meeting and conference rooms, and an 8,000-sf ballroom.

ASHLEY ST.CLAIR

RESOURCES CONCRETE PAVEMENT: Lattimore Materials Co.; **CONCRETE MATERIALS:** TXI; **STANDARD AND SPLIT FACE BLOCK:** Palestine Concrete Tile Co.; **ASTRA-GLAZE BLOCK:** Trenwyth Industries; **ARCHITECTURAL METAL WORK:** McNichols Co.; **LUMBER:** Hoover Treated Wood Products; **WATERPROOFING AND DAMPPROOFING:** Degussa/Chemrex/Sonneborn, Dupont, Tyvek, Polyguard Products, Grace Construction Products; **WATER REPELLENTS:** Grace Construction Products; **BUILDING INSULATION:** Johns Manville; **ROOF AND DECK INSULATION:** RMAX, Owens Corning, G-P Gypsum Corp., Firestone Building Products; **MEMBRANE ROOFING:** Soprema; **METAL ROOFING:** BEMO USA; **METAL DOORS AND FRAMES:** Steelcraft; **WOOD AND PLASTIC DOORS AND FRAMES:** Buell Door Co.; **ENTRANCES AND STOREFRONTS:** Kawneer; **GLAZED CURTAINWALL:** Kawneer; **GLASS:** PPG Industries; **GYPSUM BOARD FRAMING AND ACCESSORIES:** Dietrich Metal Framing, BPB America; **TILE:** Daltile; **ACOUSTICAL CEILINGS:** Chicago Metallic, BPB America, Armstrong; **FLUID APPLIED FLOORING:** Crossfield Products; **SPECIAL WALL SURFACES:** Marlite; **ACOUSTICAL WALL TREATMENTS:** Pyrok Acoustement; **PAINTS:** Sherwin Williams; **OPERABLE PARTITIONS:** Kwik-Wall; **ARENA SEATING:** Irwin Seating; **SPECIAL LIGHTING:** Color Kinetics (Architectural Lighting Associates, rep.)

GROUND FLOOR PLAN
1 MAIN LOBBY
2 GRAND STAIR
3 TICKETING
4 LOCKER ROOM
5 LECTURE HALL
6 KITCHEN
7 BALLROOM
8 MEETING ROOM
9 EVENT FLOOR



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UNT Student Recreation Center

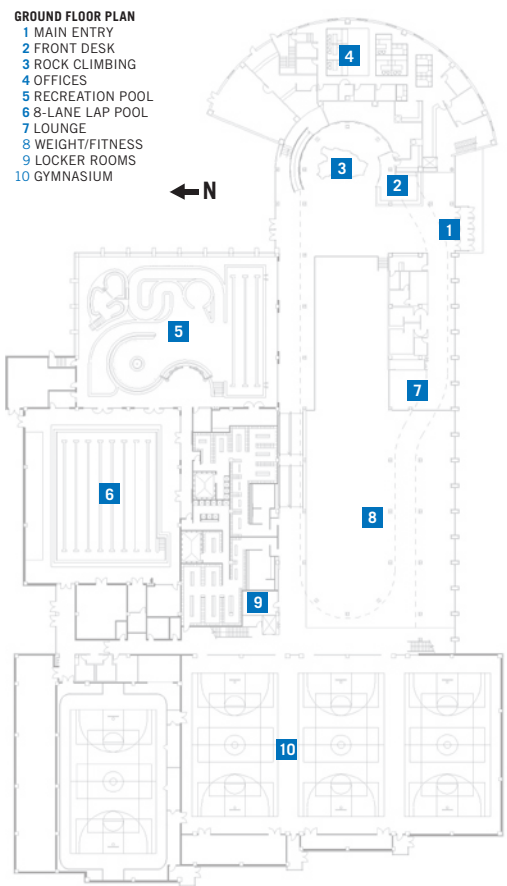
PROJECT UNT Student Recreation Center, Denton
CLIENT University of North Texas
ARCHITECT F&S Partners Incorporated
CONTRACTOR Austin Commercial
CONSULTANTS Brockette-Davis-Drake (civil/structural); Blum Consulting Engineers (MEP); Newman, Jackson, Bieberstein (landscape); PWH Architectural Lighting (lighting); Counsilman/Husaker (aquatics)
PHOTOGRAPHERS Craig Blackmon, FAIA

Located on the west side of the University of North Texas campus, the new Student Recreation Center consolidates the school's recreational sports activities into one 138,000-sf structure. Opened in 2003, the facility affords an open and welcoming atmosphere for the campus community. The generous use of translucent wall panels, glass window walls, and skylights maximize natural lighting throughout the building while reducing energy costs. The semicircular east facade wraps around a conical skylight located over the rock-climbing tower, a landmark easily seen from the center of campus. The colors of the brick, glass, and metal panels match those of pre-existing campus buildings, integrating the $24.1-million center into the campus master plan. In addition to the main entry, an auxiliary entrance permits access to the indoor soccer gymnasium and competitive swimming pool during off hours, allowing the university to generate rental revenue. The facility's interior is organized around a two-story space containing a lobby, weight and fitness room, rock-climbing walls, and a four-lane jogging track on the second level. From this central space all exercise areas are visible, adding to the dynamic of the workout experience. The facility also includes a three-court basketball gym, a combination basketball and soccer gym, a competition pool, a leisure pool, aerobic exercise rooms, and administration offices for UNT's recreational sports department. Outside, a landscaped courtyard on the north side of the building features a basketball court and sand volleyball pit.

ASHLEY ST.CLAIR

RESOURCES **UNIT PAVERS:** Pavestone; **FENCES, GATES, AND HARDWARE:** Spelrall; **SITE, STREET, AND MALL FURNISHINGS:** Landscape Forms, Inc.; **UNIT MASONRY WALL ASSEMBLIES:** Acme Brick; **GLASS UNIT MASONRY:** Pittsburgh Corning; **METAL DECKING:** Epic Metals Corp.; **ENTRANCES AND STOREFRONTS:** US Aluminum; **UNIT SKYLIGHTS:** Naturalite; **PLASTIC GLAZING:** Kalwall; **GLAZED CURTAINWALL:** US Aluminum; **TILE:** American Olean; **TERRAZZO:** American Terrazzo; **ATHLETIC SURFACING (INDOOR):** Mondo; **ATHLETIC WOOD FLOORING:** Robbins; **ACOUSTICAL WALL TREATMENTS:** Decoustics; **DECORATIVE FINISHES:** Duroplex; **BLINDS, SHUTTERS, AND SHADES:** Graber; **CLIMBING WALL:** Eldorado Wall Co.

GROUND FLOOR PLAN
1 MAIN ENTRY
2 FRONT DESK
3 ROCK CLIMBING
4 OFFICES
5 RECREATION POOL
6 8-LANE LAP POOL
7 LOUNGE
8 WEIGHT/FITNESS
9 LOCKER ROOMS
10 GYMNASIUM



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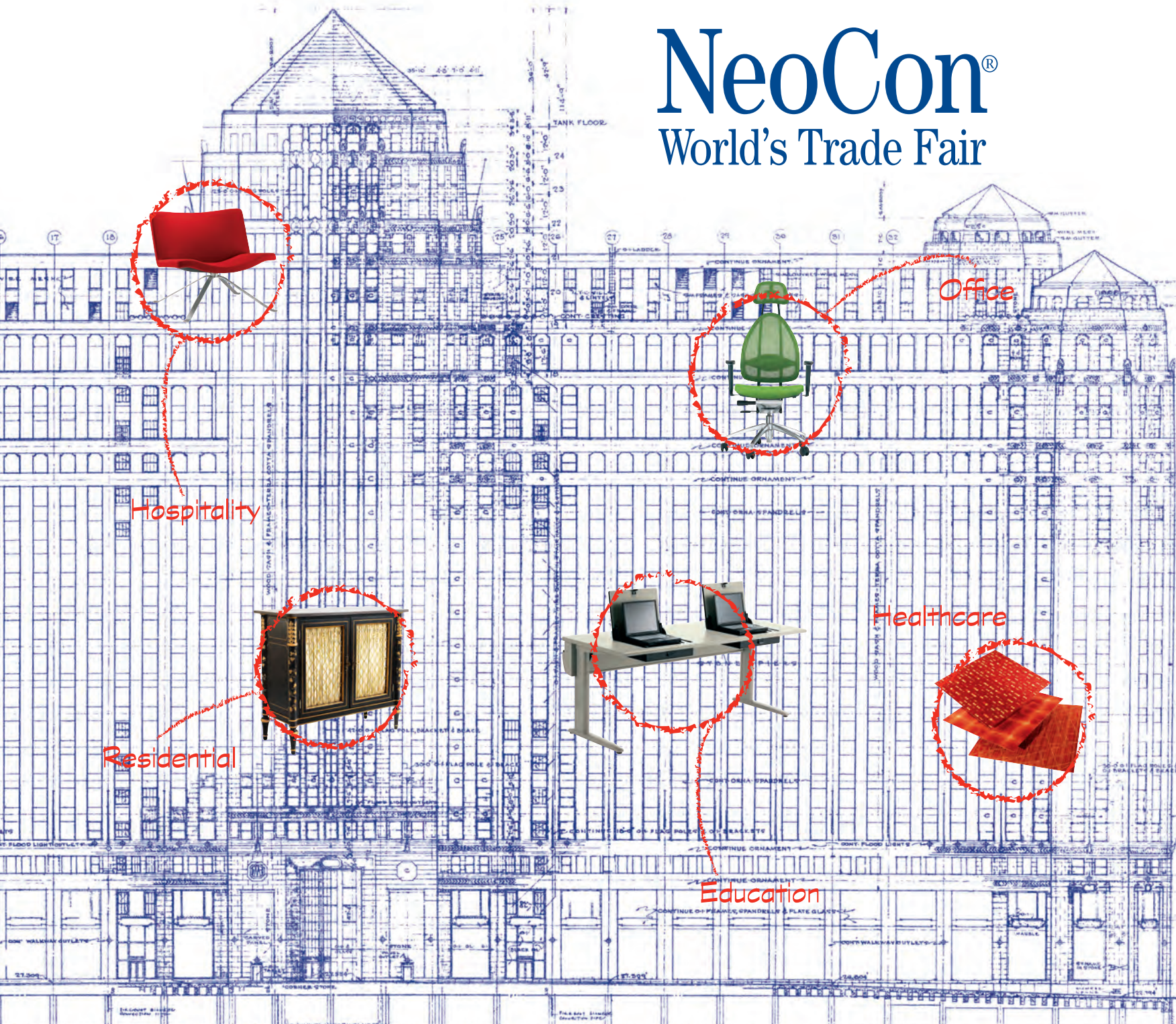

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Sites Seen and Sights Unseen

Observations, Inspections, and the Contractor's Warranty

by JAMES B. ATKINS, FAIA, and GRANT A. SIMPSON, FAIA

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BUILDING construction requires many workers and many trades. The contractors and subcontractors must coordinate and interface their work and plan how all the separate parts and pieces will fit together. A contractor coordinates the subcontractors and develops a work plan for delivering a completed project that conforms to the architect's design. Since the contractor is solely responsible for conformance of work with the contract documents, it must continuously inspect the work as it goes in place to determine that subsequent work can be placed over it, documenting minor variations for the owner's information.

The architect observes the work at certain times during the construction phase, but on a much less frequent basis and for different purposes than the contractor. Architects are charged with only being generally familiar with the work and reporting the general progress and quality of the work, as completed, to the owner. While the architect should be responsible for discovering and reporting nonconforming work that is available to be seen, the profession has been affected by a trend that indicates the sentiment among some owners and contractors that architects should be held to a much higher standard. Many such claimants assert that the architect has a responsibility similar to that of the contractor, and should discover any and all defects. These expectations can become so distorted that owners and contractors in some instances essentially state that the architect should be a warrantor of all work placed by the contractor. This has increased the risks associated with the architect's construction-phase services, particularly the requirements for observing and inspecting the work. In fact, courts have ruled that architects have failed to detect the contractor's defective work, holding that the architect has a duty to guard the owner against all nonconforming work on the project, although much of that work is installed when the architect is not present.

This article will explore the issue of work conformance and the responsibility for finding and preventing defective work. It will examine the contractual responsibilities for work con-

formance, as well as the continuing attempts by plaintiff's lawyers to hold the architect accountable for this obligation.

Contractor's Obligation and Architect's Standard

First, we will examine the contractor's obligation under the contract. In Section 3.1.2 of AIA 201-1997, *General Conditions of the Contract for Construction (A201)*: "The Contractor shall perform the Work in accordance with the Contract Documents…" This requirement is straightforward and absolute. There are no qualifications or overriding conditions that can alter or relieve this obligation. In fact, Section 3.1.3 of A201 states: "The Contractor shall not be relieved of obligations to perform the Work in accordance with the Contract Documents either by activities or duties of the Architect…or by tests, inspections, or approvals required or performed by persons other than the Contractor." In addition, Section 3.3.3 requires continuous inspection of work already in place, by the contractor: "The Contractor shall be responsible for inspection of portions of Work already performed to determine that such portions are in proper condition to receive subsequent Work." The bottom line is that the contractor controls the work, the contractor is required to inspect the work for conformance, and the contractor contractually warrants the work free from defects. This responsibility is absolute, and it is not superseded by the architect's observations, inspections, or approvals.

The *Architects Handbook of Professional Practice*, thirteenth edition, on page 480 describes the "standard of reasonable care" as follows: "The architect is required to do what a reasonably prudent architect would do in the same community and in the same time frame, given the same or similar facts and circumstances." Furthermore, on the same page, the Handbook also addresses matters that relate to the level of perfection that must be achieved in performing architectural services: " The law does not require perfection from an architect. As with any complicated human endeavor in which success depends on the exercise of reasoned judgment and skill, the law recognizes that perfection in architecture is a much-sought-after but rarely achieved, end. … *Accordingly, the law does not look to architects to guarantee, warrant, or otherwise ensure the results of their efforts…*" (emphasis added) and: "Many clients do not understand that architects are neither able nor required to perform perfectly. Such clients have high expectations for their projects and want their design professionals to provide guarantees…They may do so without understanding that *architects, like lawyers and doctors, provide their clients with services, not products*. They may also fail to realize that professional judgment is required at each step. Architects need to remind these participants that buildings, unlike automobiles, can't be pre-tested, and that no amount of effort, care, and conscientiousness on the architect's part can foresee every aspect of transforming a design on paper into reality (emphasis added)." Architect should be responsible for discovering and reporting defective work when they become aware of it. However, expectations in the industry have risen above this level of duty, and today court pleadings are filled with allegations of absolute responsibility on the part of the architect (see sidebar on p. 56).

> Architects should be responsible for discovering and reporting defective work when they become aware of it. However, expectations in the industry have risen above this level of duty, and today court pleadings are filled with allegations of absolute responsibility on the part of the architect.

When the quality or conformance of the work is questioned, the assertion is often made that the architect "approved," "allowed," or "permitted" the contractor's defective work by certifying an application for payment, signing a change order, or certifying substantial completion. While the owner can accept nonconforming work if he so chooses, there is no provision contained within the AIA documents that allows the architect to accept work that is not in conformance with the contract documents. Moreover, A201 empowers the architect to reject nonconforming work. Section 4.2.6 states: "The Architect will have authority to reject Work that does not conform to the Contract Documents." A201 clearly states that the architect's certification of a payment application does not represent approval of the work. Section 9.6.6 reads: "A Certificate for Payment…shall not constitute acceptance of Work not in accordance with the Contract Documents." This avenue of making claims overlooks several other important aspects of the provisions of the AIA documents, all of which are intended to prohibit the architect from accepting nonconforming work rather than place a finite obligation on the architect to detect nonconforming work. A201 addresses defective work placed by the contractor in Section 3.5.1 as such: "The Contractor warrants to the Owner *and Architect* that…the Work will be free from defects not inherent in the quality required or permitted, and *that the Work will conform to the requirements of the Contract Documents* (emphasis added)."

Here, the contractor provides an express warranty to both the owner and the architect that there will be no defective work on the project. Unfortunately, the contractor's warranty to the architect, should the architect experience a loss caused by the contractor's defective or nonconforming work, may be of little value if the contractor is bankrupt or no longer in business. Moreover, the architect not only does not provide such a warranty concerning the quality of the work, the architect has no responsibility for the contractor's performance as indicated in A201. Section 4.2.3 states: "The architect will not be responsible for the Contractor's failure to perform the work in accordance with the requirements of the contract documents. The architect will not have control over or charge of and will not be responsible for acts or omissions of the Contractor, Subcontractors, or their agents or employees, or any other persons or entities performing portions of the Work."

So how is it that many have come to believe that the architect's obligation to discover defects on a project is similar to, or even greater, than the contractor's guarantee that there will be none? Perhaps some derive this erroneous notion from the architect's authority to reject nonconforming work of which the architect becomes aware as stated above in A201 and in AIA Document B141-1997 Part 2, *Standard Form of Architect's Services: Design and Contract Administration (B141)*. Section 2.6.2.5 states: "The Architect shall have authority to reject Work that does not conform to the Contract Documents." Hence, there is absolutely no obligation conferred in this paragraph to detect nonconforming work, only authority to reject it if discovered.

Guarding the Owner

Plaintiff's lawyers often attempt to use a clause in Section 2.6.2.1 of B141 to place the architect in the role of policing the contractor. However, Section 2.6.2.1 describes the architect's obligation this way: "The Architect, as a representative of the Owner, shall…*endeavor* to guard the Owner against defects and deficiencies in the Work…(emphasis added)." The definition of endeavor is "to attempt to do" or "to try to do"—but there is neither absolute obligation nor overriding cause for the architect "to do," such as there is with the contractor's obligation to continuously inspect those portions of the work that are to receive subsequent work.

Rightfully, these clauses related to endeavoring to guard the owner against the contractor's defective work must be balanced against the limited nature of the review of the work the architect is required to do when the architect visits the project site. This is addressed in A201 and with almost identical wording in B141 Section 2.6.2.1: "The Architect… shall visit the site…(1) to become generally familiar with and to keep the owner informed about the progress and quality of the portion of the Work completed…(3) to determine *in general* if the Work is being performed in a manner indicating that the Work, when fully completed, will be in accordance with the Contract Documents. However, *the Architect shall not be required to make exhaustive or continuous on-site inspections* to check the quality or quantity of the Work (emphasis added)." Thus, although the architect has authority to reject any nonconforming work that is apparent, the architect does not have a duty to discover all defective work. (The term "in general" used in the above citation is vague, unlike more specific terms such as "in detail" or "in total.") In fact, the expectation that an architect could discover all defective work on a project is unrealistic due to the architect's limited presence on the site. Even when the architect provides a full-time on-site project representative on larger projects, the representative's obligation in this regard is limited compared to the contractor. Architects do have a duty to endeavor to guard the owner against defective work, but this obligation is restricted by the limited duty to become *generally familiar* with the work.

The AIA documents and the standard of care clearly indicate that the contractor's obligation and responsibility to install competent and conforming work is not overridden by placing a stronger responsibility on the architect to "catch" him if he does not. In the absence of a specific contract requirement, the architect is not an insurer, ensurer, guarantor, or warrantor of the contractor's performance. No sane architect would agree to such a provision in a contract, and it is not the intent of the AIA documents or the standard of care to place such a responsibility on the architect.

Some owners undoubtedly desire that faithful performance by all parties involved in designing and constructing their projects be covered by some form of insurance. One such avenue is a performance and payment bond. Under ordinary circumstances, the owner has the right to require that the contractor assure its performance by requiring a Performance and Payment Bond as described in Section 11.5.1 of A201: "The Owner shall have the right to require the Contractor to furnish bonds covering faithful performance of the Contract and payment of obligations arising thereunder as stipulated in bidding requirements or specifically required in the Contract Documents on the date of execution of the Contract." In traditional project delivery, there is no such requirement in the AIA documents or in industry practice for the architect to provide a bond covering the contractor's faithful performance, and we are not aware of an instance where an architect has provided such assurance through either a contract or a bond. If owners want a financial guarantee of the contractor's faithful performance, that protection should rightfully be purchased through the contractor and not pursued indirectly through the architect's professional liability insurance policy.

The contractor has well-defined responsibilities and obligations to ensure that the work conforms to the requirements of the contract documents, including supervising the work and providing a "warranty" to the owner and the architect, as cited in the text above. The primary reason that the contractor makes a warranty to the architect is that the architect can never be in the position of observing all of the work of the contractor, subcontractors, and other parties performing the work. It would literally require an army of architects continuously present on the site to see all of the work at every stage of the construction project. Professional service of that sort would certainly be considered "exhaustive or continuous on-site inspections," if not direction and supervision.

As previously stated, the architect does not supervise or direct the contractor or the work. The responsibility for supervising and directing the work rests solely with the contractor, and A201 is explicit about these responsibilities. Section 3.3.1 states: "The Contractor shall supervise and direct the work using the Contractor's best skill and attention. The Contractor shall be solely responsible for and have control over construction means, methods, techniques, sequences and procedures and for coordinating all portions of the Work under the Contract…" Furthermore, Section 3.3.2 states: "The Contractor shall be responsible to the Owner for the acts and omissions of the Contractor's employees, Subcontractors and their agents and employees, and other persons or entities performing portions of the work for or on behalf of the Contractor or any of its Subcontractors." In addition, we have already seen that 3.3.3 requires the contractor to continuously inspect the work in progress.

The issue of observing the work and detecting and reporting deficiencies is fraught with risks, as we have enthusiastically put forth. However, all of the above not withstanding, an architect can be found responsible for failing to "endeavor to guard" as in the example where site visits and observations are made and defective work readily available to be observed is not cited or

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reported. Challenging inequities do not absolve the architect from performing in accordance with a reasonable standard of care. While the architect should not be required or expected to warrant the contractor's work, the architect's contracted duties during the construction phase should be taken seriously and performed appropriately.

Sole Responsibility

AIA Document A201 clearly states that the contractor is solely responsible for the work. Indeed, the contractor controls every aspect of the work. This control includes final decisions about which materials and product vendors will be used. They determine how the work is to be installed and how the work installation is to be divided and coordinated among subcontractors. Perhaps the contractor's most important responsibility is the obligation to make sure the work conforms to the contract documents. The contractor provides an express warranty to both the owner and the architect that the work will be in conformance with the design concept expressed in the contract documents.

The architect interprets the contract drawings and reviews the contractor's submittals, coordination drawings, and clarification sketches – all of which anticipate the finished project – for conformance with the design concept. The architect observes the work to form general opinions about progress and quality, and reports the status to the owner. At no time does the architect approve the work in its totality. There is no reasonable way that the architect can see each piece of material as it goes into the project. Only the contractor is in a position to provide that service. Substantial completion is "substantial" but not "total." Final completion is the correction of known, but not necessarily all, items that require correction or completion.

Irresponsible Claims

Claims against architects are often written in a way to try to take advantage of a particular state law, or to put the design professional in as unflattering position as possible. The following examples are styled after actual claims filed against design professionals, and they are typical of what a design professional may expect if an owner unhappy with the quality of the work claims the architect should pay all or a portion of the cost of remedying nonconforming work. In all of these examples, the contract documents include the standard AIA contract language cited in this article, found in B141 and A201. In addition, the owner in all of the following examples is claiming damages by the architect in the full amount of the cost of remedying the nonconforming work placed by the contractor and covered by the contractor's warranty.

None of these examples survives scrutiny when compared with the architect's responsibilities as defined by the AIA documents, with a reasonable standard of care, or with any reasonable interpretation of who should be responsible for nonconforming work. It is physically impossible for an architect to witness and have knowledge of every component placed in a building. There is simply no reasonable or logical way to conclude, "Sure, the contractor built it wrong, but it's your fault because you let him do it."

–J. Atkins and G. Simpson

Catch Me If You Can

The plaintiff's lawyers claimed as follows, admitting that the contractor did the work badly, but only because the architect did not catch them: *The roof drains are not installed properly; Scuppers are not installed properly; Gaps in the flashings exist; Pitch pans on the roof are not fully filled;… The architect failed to document and report defective work*. In addition, this one also reflects a belief in the awesome power of the architect to "allow" the contractor to perform badly: *The contractor performed work well below acceptable industry standards, provided and installed inferior materials, failed to perform required testing… failed to adequately supervise work of the subcontractors. The architects failed to provide acceptable contract administration services by permitting substandard work and poor workmanship…*

Architect As Director

Plaintiff's lawyers also are fond of claiming that the architect should have been directing the work, as in this example: *Failure to properly perform construction administration responsibilities. Architect was responsible for poor sequencing among the various trades.* This claim was filed although A201 clearly states in Section 3.3 that directing and coordinating the work of the subcontractors, and construction sequences, are the contractor's responsibility.

You Bought the Farm

Another favorite avenue of plaintiff's lawyers for making claims against architects involves certifications for payment by the architect: *The contractor executed substandard and non conforming work…by certifying the contractor's Applications for Payment that included costs for nonconforming work the Architect failed in his duties during the Contract Administration phase and failed in his responsibility to the owner.*

Adult Supervision

The assertion that the architect has a greater duty than the contractor to supervise the work is evidenced by the following claim. This disingenuous allegation is so prevalent in lawsuits against architects these days that it could be viewed as "generic": *At the time that contractor's defective work was performed Architect was supervising the work at the site. Additionally, the work was performed while Architect was in charge of the work. This evidence creates a genuine issue as to whether Architect violated its contractual duty to "guard the Owner against defects and deficiencies in the Work."*

Most Expertly, If You Please

Not only do plaintiffs' lawyers make claims not supported by the AIA documents or the standard of care, such claims are also made by plaintiff's experts. The following style of "opinion" submitted by an "expert" is also so prevalent that it could be considered "generic" as well: *…most, if not all, of the issues noted are the result of poor workmanship and nonconforming work performed by the contractor. These problems were exacerbated by the Architect's failure to observe nonconforming work, notify the owner and require that the work be redone.*

The architect's certification of the contractor's applications for payment is based on the general progress of the observed work and the contractor's notarized certification that the application is accurate and consistent with the work progress. The architect and the owner must rely on the contractor's written guarantee that the work is in conformance. According to A201, this obligation withstands all actions of the architect, including observations, inspections, submittal approvals, and payment certifications. This absolute power of the contractor to control and be responsible for the work is never shared, assigned, or assumed by any other party.

By contrast, architects have no authority over subcontractors. They have no power over construction, and they have no obligation or duty to warrant that the contractor's work is free from defects and deficiencies or is in strict conformance to the contract documents. The architect's obligation is to endeavor to guard the owner against defects and deficiencies in the work and means nothing more. The premise that "guarding the owner" includes detailed knowledge of every building component is not only unachievable; it runs counter to the contractor's "sole responsibility" and the warranty that backs it up.

Administering the construction contract provides valuable services to the owner, and it increases the chances of preserving the design concept. It also gives the architect an opportunity to address errors and omissions, hopefully before the work is installed. However, observing and inspecting the work absolutely brings risks that may not result in absolution, and we must be mindful of the claims owners, their lawyers and contractors sometimes make regarding ways they believe the architect should be an insurer, supervisor, director and guarantor of the contractor's work.

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"Pavilions" continued from page 25

In 1996, the Park and Recreation Department commissioned a new custom picnic pavilion for a small inner-city park located in the shadow of Aldo Cossutta's Cityplace Tower. This elegant and diminutive shelter at J.W. Ray Park was designed by landscape architect Coy Talley as part of a larger site re-development project. Its critical success was followed two years later with the completion of the department's first custom "replacement" pavilion at Lindsley Park. Designed by Brown Reynolds Watford Architects, this shelter represented a conscientious effort to incorporate architectural forms, details, and materials prevalent in the surrounding neighborhood, a 1920s subdivision of brick- and stone-veneered Tudor cottages. The pavilions at J.W. Ray and Lindsley parks were exceptions to how picnic shelters were built in Dallas parks throughout the 1990s, however. Due to tight capital budgets, the overwhelming majority of these pavilions were prefabricated shelters adapted to each park site.

With the successful passage of a $100 million bond referendum in 2003, Dallas was in a position to upgrade the standard replacement pavilion to something more ambitious than a catalog specification. Ample funding in the bond program was allocated for 23 new or replacement pavilions. Each of these was assigned to an architect with a record of design excellence, along with a straightforward architectural program: the pavilion should be durable and easy to maintain; it should be contextual within the surrounding community and embraced by the neighborhood; it should be functional; and most importantly, it should be safe. The final deliverable product requested of each architect was a one-quarter-inch scale wood model and a single presentation board, both suitable for exhibition.

Residents see the pavilion program as an encouraging sign of the city's reinvestment in their neighborhoods with architectural assets that can transform their parks from gang-ravaged liabilities to attributes of their community's economic health and vitality.

Among the Dallas architects invited to participate in the program are the Beck Group; Oglesby-Greene Architects; Sharon Odum, AIA, and Ron Wommack, FAIA (in collaboration); Cliff Welch, AIA; Laguarda-Low Architects; Frank Welch, FAIA; dsgn; Good, Fulton & Farrell; Ed Baum, FAIA; T. Howard & Associates; and Dan Shipley, FAIA. In addition, Lawrence Speck, FAIA, of Page Southerland Page in Austin, and Rand Elliott, FAIA, in Oklahoma City were invited to contribute pavilion designs, along with four firms based in New Orleans—BildIt, Barron & Toups Architects, Wayne Troyer, and Eskew+Dumez+Ripple Architects. (Considerable effort was taken in tracking down these architects who had evacuated New Orleans in the diaspora caused by Hurricane Katrina last September. The invitations to participate stemmed from a desire to help the architects begin to recover their interrupted practices.) And drawn from even further afield were Allied Works Architecture in Portland, Ore., W Architecture in New York City, and Snøhetta in Oslo, Norway.

Seven pavilion designs had been completed as of early April, in addition to the design of a shade structure at Randall Park added to the program last year. (See "Will's Plaza" on page 16 in the March/April 2006 edition of *Texas Architect*.) In several cases, the pavilions are but one component of a larger site development package that might also include a playground designed by the same architect. The designers have adopted a wide-range of approaches, starting with Cliff Welch's sensitive refurbishment (at the request of the neighborhood) of an existing 1960s precast concrete "T" shelter at Churchill Park to be architecturally compatible with a nearby recreation center. The replacement pavilion at Martin Weiss Park, designed by Bob Meckfessel, FAIA, of dsgn, also acknowledges adjacent park buildings while simultaneously coping with a stream that meanders through the site. In their pavilion at Casa View Park, Odum and Wommack created a ceiling plane of galvanized tubes suspended beneath steel beams and a translucent fiberglass skylight. At night, up lights beneath the skylight will transform the pavilion into a lantern for the surrounding neighborhood—a stalwart symbol of security in a park previously ravaged by gang activities.

Baum's elegant design for a pavilion at Ridgewood Park (currently under construction) incorporates a graceful folded-plane roof that recalls a modernist chaise lounge—an appropriate metaphor given its location adjacent to a water-spray park. Good, Fulton & Farrell's Jon Rollins, AIA, designed a pavilion for Pecan Grove Park that consists of a series of structural frames and roof panels that transform through multiple planes of motion, varying in sequence from flat to steeply pitched, thereby creating a directional focus on an adjacent meadow. In contrast, Shipley's design for a pavilion at Valley View Park incorporates a more traditional architectural form reminiscent of the open-air tabernacle buildings found at Methodist revival campgrounds throughout East Texas during the nineteenth century. The shelter's truncated hipped roof – made of corrugated Cor-Ten steel – is capped by a flat, open-sided monitor that both ventilates the structure and admits natural light. Photovoltaic cells located atop the flat roof panel will power up lights suspended within the space on steel rods. Elliott's pavilion is a brilliant piece of red and silver origami—a folded aluminum plane that will become the visual focal point of Opportunity Park in South Dallas. Situated amongst a magnificent grove of stately pecan trees, Elliott's shelter will serve as a performance shell for festivals and special events.

Laguarda-Low's Pablo Laguarda, AIA, has designed two pavilions. For St. Augustine Park in Pleasant Grove, the architect envisions a striking horizontal structure carefully placed within a spacious play field surrounded by trees. Its side walls, roof, and floor will form a thin concrete shell that will frame stunning views "through" the shelter from one side of the park to the other. Laguarda's pavilion design for H.R. Moore Park in West Dallas, by contrast, takes a more metaphorical approach by featuring two rows of gigantic folded-plane "leaves" supported by structural "twigs" and "branches."

Although less than half the pavilions funded in the 2003 bond program have been designed, the early response from citizens and stakeholders has been positive. The pavilion projects are viewed by residents as a vital and encouraging sign of neighborhood reinvestment by the City of Dallas. The ability of architecture to transform these parks back into the solid neighborhood assets they once were – as well as the economic impact on the neighborhood itself – will be closely studied. In the meantime, Park and Recreation Department officials are preparing another bond package. Tentatively scheduled to go before voters this November, the referendum will request as much as $400 million toward continued reinvestment in the city's park system—including more park pavilions.

Designs for the picnic pavilions will be displayed at the TSA convention slated Nov. 2-4 in Dallas.

A *TA* contributing editor, Willis Cecil Winters, AIA, is the assistant director of planning, design, and construction for the City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department.

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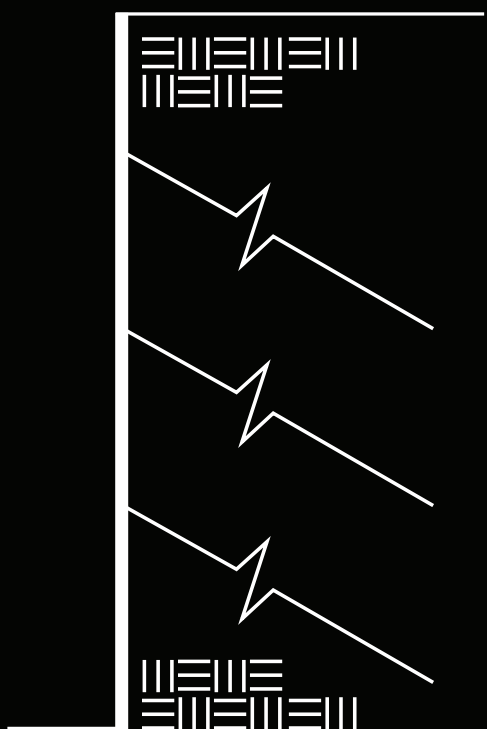

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Construction Industry Expected to Benefit from Positive Conditions

The Architecture Billings Index (ABI), a leading economic indicator of nonresidential construction activity in the U.S., was positive again in February. The ABI has been positive for 17 consecutive months and 26 out of the 27 months, after seasonal adjustments. This is the longest stretch that the index has been positive since April 1998 through December 2000. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) reported the February ABI rating was 55.5, with any score above 50 indicating an increase. "The fact that we are seeing consistently strong numbers at architecture firms over such a prolonged period without any dips is especially encouraging for the nonresidential construction outlook," said AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker, Ph.D., Hon. AIA. "These figures are following along a similar path as the conditions that led to a very healthy construction sector in the late 1990s." This positive news for the nonresidential construction industry comes after the index of U.S. homebuilders fell in March to its lowest level in three years. Rising interest rates and a weakening demand for new homes were cited as the reasons for the drop. Key ABI highlights include: regional index breakdown (Midwest - 60.3, South - 59, West - 46.2); sector index breakdown (mixed - 61, commercial/industrial - 54.8, institutional - 49.9); and a Billings inquiries index of 63.4. For more information, visit *www.aia.org/econ_abi*.

Canadian Cement Industry Releases Sustainability Report

The Cement Association of Canada (CAC) launched the industry's first sustainability report in March at Globe 2006 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Globe is an international environmental conference where organizations from around the world gather to discuss sustainable development and share best practices. The global cement industry has chosen to adopt an agenda for sustainable development for three reasons: to prepare for a more sustainable future; to meet the expectations of stakeholders; and to individually identify and capitalize on new market opportunities. The report focuses on cement manufacturing and includes performance from Canadian manufacturers of portland cement as of 2004. Themes in the report were inspired by the World Business Council on Sustainable Development's Cement Sustainability Initiative and reflect key topics of interest. The report provides information on environmental, social, and economic performance and key sustainability initiatives and achievements of member companies. CAC intends to publish a sustainabilty report every two years to enable interested parties to monitor its progress in these areas. For more information and to view the report, visit *www.cement.org*.

Glass Surplus Puts Brakes on New Projects

Construction glass makers are lobbying the Vietnamese government to suspend the licensing of new glass-making projects until 2010 due to concerns of an imminent surplus crisis in the domestic market. The Viet Nam Construction Glass Association argued that given the industry's current production capacity, the domestic market could be saturated within five years. The association suggested the Vietnamese government should not license new foreign-invested or joint-venture projects for the next five years, and that private investors should be made aware of the market situation. The association's statistics reveal Vietnam now has seven large production lines which rolled out 75 million sq.m of glass last year, but a huge inventory of 25 million sq.m had built up due to falling demands. For more information, *visit www.glassonweb.com*.

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Study Eliminates Cost as Deterrent to Balanced Design

Fire Safety Construction Cost Comparison Study, commissioned by the Fire Safety Construction Advisory Councils of Pennsylvania, New England/New York, and the Mid-Atlantic, documents the cost associated with the use of balanced design in common multi-family residential buildings. Fire safety and building experts have long recognized the attributes of balanced design, the combination of active and passive fire systems, as the best protection of the occupants of multi-residency buildings. The study compares the construction costs of two types of four-story multi-family dwellings in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. For the complete study and more information, visit *www.firesafeconstruction.org*.

Safety Questions over New Orleans' Levee Design

A panel of engineers warned the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that flaws in the design of the 17th Street Canal in New Orleans, including inadequate safety margins, could exist in every other section of the city's flood control system. The review panel's work was disclosed on March 20 at a New Orleans meeting of the National Research Council's New Orleans hurricane protection committee. The review panel's work is part of an ongoing investigation and review of the Corps' own investigations. The panel is calling for an immediate reevaluation of current design loadings for all I-walls. It also is calling for reevaluation of all levees underlain by soft soils and a reevaluation of the factors of safety applied to the designs. For more information, *visit http://enr.construction.com*.

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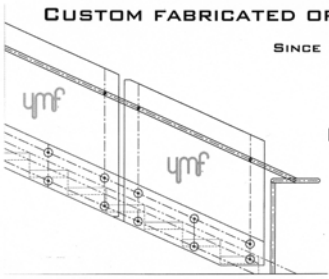

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Prospect and Refuge

Hurricane Rita suddenly revealed a city's unheralded modernist architectural tradition

by JUSTIN HOWARD, AIA

ARCHITECTURE is the practice of optimism in the face of the destructive powers of nature and man. It is a defiant standing of ground between the whim of nature and the will of man. Architects seek to design places of meaning and permanence, but we are constantly reminded of the forces at work against the built environment. Last year's catastrophic storm surge from Hurricane Katrina is among the most recent demonstrations of how nature holds sway over man's creations. Inundated New Orleans and devastated swaths of the Mississippi Gulf Coast are images we are not likely to forget.

For three decades Marvin Gordy's residence hid behind a curtain of trees now stripped bare by hurricane-force winds.

Unlike Katrina, Hurricane Rita wielded wind, not water, when she assaulted Beaumont last September. In her aftermath I was surprised to discover that my city possesses several humble works of modernist residential architecture. Fortunately, Rita did little or no significant damage to these houses, but almost completely defoliated the trees that for decades had hidden these jewels from public view.

Of particular note is a modest home that local architect Marvin Gordy designed and built in 1973. In its first few years, the house enjoyed a degree of seclusion due to its remote location on the western outskirts of town. But by the mid-1970s, suburban development began to encroach on its privacy. Rita finished the job, stripping a previously impenetrable layer of trees from the front portion of the site. Gordy, who still lives in the house, has since designed a stucco wall to restore his "refuge" by creating a private courtyard at the front. The discovery of Gordy's residence, along with several others that have been suddenly revealed, has led me to look more closely for evidence of Beaumont's modernist heritage.

Luckily, Rita did not "wipe the slate clean." Nor, as natural disasters have done elsewhere, did Rita expose dysfunctional manifestations of misguided or nefarious social, economic, and political action. But the damage she inflicted in and around Beaumont is still keeping us busy. While our post-hurricane work is mostly focused on the tedious fundamentals of building performance – repairs, replacing roofs, and the like – we are reminded of our profession's essential responsibility to provide both prospect and refuge, the simultaneous attributes of good design that allow people the freedom to engage their surroundings while also protecting them from nature's forces. That responsibility, seen anew in Rita's aftermath, humbles me, and with a deeper respect for nature my eyes have opened to an inspiring tradition of architecture in my own community that I had previously overlooked.

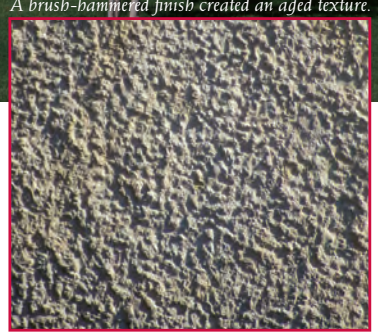
Justin Howard, AIA, practices in Beaumont.

Temple of stone creates divine architecture

A 1930s menorrah blended with new limestone.

Ancient Jerusalem inspired gated entries and courtyards.

A brush-hammered finish created an aged texture.



Beth-El Congregation Temple, Fort Worth
architect Hahnfeld Hoffer Stanford, Fort Worth
general contractor DeMoss Co., Fort Worth
masonry contractor DMG Masonry, Arlington

Photography: Ray Don Tilley, Bastrop, TX

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"Beth-El is an established congregation, so the design for its new temple had to reflect a sense of permanence. We used Texas Quarries Cordova Cream limestone with a brush hammered finish to recall antiquity. We even integrated carved limestone menorrahs from the original building seamlessly into the new design. The layout was inspired by Solomon's Temple. Gated entries lead you from street to courtyard to the sequence of spaces inside, which progressively become more sacred. Each enclosure opens onto a courtyard and is scaled to create a sense of ancient Jerusalem. Despite these allusions, this is clearly a modern structure, one particularly well-suited to the timeless and comforting qualities of Texas Quarries limestone."

— David Stanford, AIA, Hahnfeld Hoffer Stanford, Fort Worth

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